

BBR

No: 17 Winter 1990

£1.75 / \$5

New Fiction and Fantasy from

Philip Gladwin	page 6
Nicholas Royle	page 13
Rick Cadger	page 23
Miles Hadfield	page 28
<i>plus BBR Review</i>	page 35



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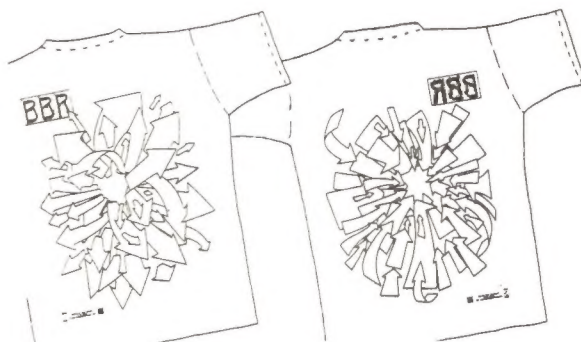
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BBR

No: 17

Winter 1990



Cover by Michael Marrak

This issue is illustrated by:

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Dreyfus	(p3)
Alfred Klosterman	(p31)
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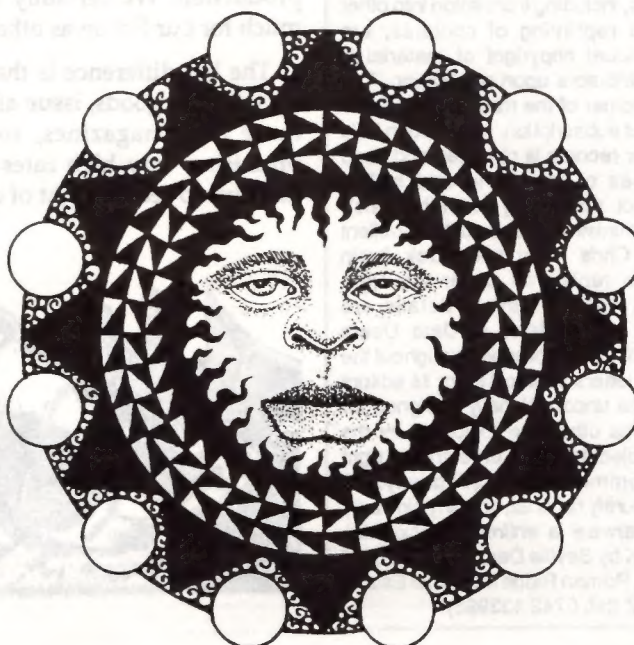
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BACK BRAIN RECLUSE

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Founder member of the NSFA

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A step in the right direction

Publishing's a thankless task, but we must be doing something right. Just six months after relaunching BBR in the A4 format, we have secured national trade distribution for the magazine through Diamond-Europress (who as it happens also handle *Interzone*). As from next issue, BBR will be available in newsagents throughout the UK.

This is a fantastic breakthrough for the magazine. We've said for a long time that the market can support – and indeed *requires* – more than just one widely available fiction magazine. Readers and writers deserve a choice, deserve the chance to experiment and expand their tastes. A more mature outlook and greater appreciation of the variety of imaginative fiction available, not just within SF but within the whole spectrum of fiction writing, depends on that freedom of choice.

As David Pringle said last issue, magazine publishing is a tough and competitive business. We're under no illusions of the challenge ahead of us, and we look forward to seeing what readers *really* like reading, once they're given the chance to choose for themselves.

Our national distribution deal also makes a mockery of the traditional distinctions between 'professional' and 'small press' or 'little' publications. There's no big corporation suddenly behind us to underwrite our expansion. We don't rely on spin-offs from more lucrative sectors of the genre for our subsistence. We don't have flash full-colour production. We certainly don't pay as much for our fiction as other magazines.

The big difference is that BBR comes up with the goods, issue after issue. All these new magazines, some of them promising very high rates of payment, have yet to see the light of day, let alone

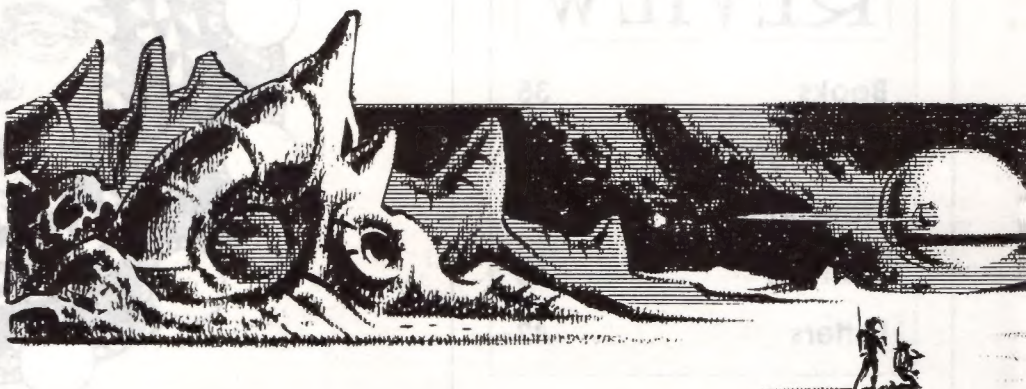
establish a regular schedule and readership. But there's more to stories than just £/1,000. You don't need big money to have a professional approach to your work. BBR has already proved that. We've established our track record not only in the UK, but in the United States, Canada, Eastern Europe and South America.

A lot of it has to do with attitude. Publishing a magazine is not simply a matter of laying down two columns of text and slapping the author's name across the cover. If you really care about what you're doing, you demonstrate that with the final product. You put some thought into the design, you encourage creative input from the artists so that text and illustrations form a more cohesive whole. You encourage readers to expand their tastes, rather than pandering to the lowest common denominator.

This type of approach is not unique to BBR by any means, but it is certainly less prevalent in the professional press than in the independent press, where high profit margins are not the prime motivation.

Nonetheless, it seems our attitude has earned BBR a good deal of respect. Our subscribers renew their subs *before* it's expired, for fear of missing an issue. We get writers who waive their payment, saying they're not looking for money when they 'sell' to BBR, it's enough just to be published in the magazine.

That sense of community to us is one of the most important things we've achieved with BBR. That's why, even though we have to raise the cover price to £1.95 next issue, we're holding subscriptions at the present rate of 4/£6.30 for at least another year. So just because we'll be selling several thousand more copies of the magazine, don't expect us



to suddenly change the way we work. It's taken more than six years of hard slog to get the magazine this far, and to earn our reputation as the UK's mainstay of adventurous and dangerous speculative fiction.

We've no intention of throwing that away by glibly thumbing our nose at the past, and alienating the people who have supported us from the beginning.

Without turning this into an Oscar acceptance speech, we would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone whose support and backing has enabled us to get the magazine this far.

First and foremost, that means our body of hardcore subscribers, and also our regular advertisers, in particular Dave Lashmar at *Beanos* in Croydon and Dave Bromehead at the *Sheffield Space Centre*; Anne Marsden, our Stateside subscription agent; the other NSFA editors; the individual contributors involved in the magazine; and everyone else who has donated their time and talent to our cause.

Thankyou for sharing our vision of a magazine to take speculative fiction into the 1990s. We like to think you're in at the start of something big. □

BBR on tour

BBR will be attending the following conventions, and manning a stall with other NSFA editors and contributors. Any readers who care to drop by for a chat and a few beers will be very welcome.

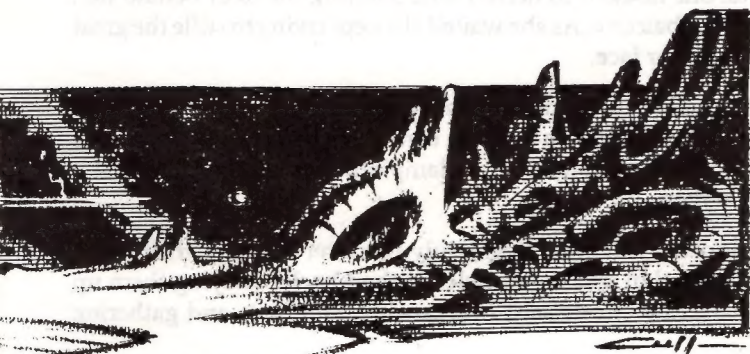
1991:

29 March – 1 April : Speculation (42nd British SF Convention), Hospitality Inn, Glasgow.
24–26 May: Mexicon 4, The Old Swan Hotel, Harrogate.
8–14 September: Volgacon, Volgograd, USSR.
27–30 September: Albacon '91, Central Hotel, Glasgow.

1992:

17–20 April: Illumination (43rd British SF Convention), Norbreck Castle Hotel, Blackpool.

All details courtesy of *Critical Wave* – see their latest issue for contact addresses, registration fees and other relevant information (£1:50 from Critical Wave, 845 Alum Rock Road, Ward End, Birmingham B8 2AG). □



Market round-up

We said last issue that, of all the new magazines we mentioned in **BBR** #15, only *Nightfall* had so far gone into regular production. True to form, Jason Smith proved us wrong whilst **BBR** #16 was at print by bringing out the first issue of *Exuberance*. See his advert on page 38 for details on how to order copies.

On a sadder note, Mark Haw has written to inform us that his plans for his magazine *H*, which we also mentioned in **BBR** #15, have now been abandoned.

Fortunately, more new magazines are still coming to our attention:

PEEPING TOM: #1 A5, 40pp, £1:50 (4/£5:50) from David Bell, Yew Tree House, 15 Nottingham Road, Ashby de la Zouch, Leicestershire LE6 5DJ.

THE HARDCORE: #4 A4, 44pp, £1:80 (4/£6) from Scott Dorward, 1st Floor Flat, 212 Croydon Road, Beckenham, Kent BR3 4DE.

If you're interested in contributing or subscribing, then send them an SAE or 2 IRCs for more information. □

Mick Farren

In last issue's review of Mick Farren's *Armageddon Crazy* we stated that Farren has written only four novels in the last 17 years. Ho hum. It seems we were way off the mark, and that figure should have been more like 15 novels.

I did contact Farren's UK publishers Orbit for background information and the possibility of an interview back in June, but have yet to receive a reply. My apologies to Mr Farren and our readers for the limited information otherwise available.

In the meantime, **BBR** readers and Mick Farren fans Richard Brown in Rotherham and Glenn Branca in New York have been quick to put the record straight. To the best of Glenn's knowledge, here's a list of Farren's output to date:

The Texts of Festival (1973)
The Tale of Willy's Rats (?)
The Quest of the DNA Cowboys (1976)
Synaptic Manhunt (1977)
The Neural Atrocity (1977)
Phaid the Gambler (1981), *Citizen Phaid* (1981) (published in the UK in one volume as *The Song of Phaid the Gambler*)
The Black Leather Jacket (1985) (non-fiction)
Protectorate (1985)
Vickers (1986) (published in the UK as *Corpse*)
Their Master's War (1987)
The Long Orbit (1988)
(published in the UK as *Exit Funtopia*)
The Armageddon Crazy (1989)
The Last Stand of the DNA Cowboys (1989)
Mars: The Red Planet (1990)
The Feelies (1978/1990)

Glenn Branca highly recommends the last five of these, and says that a new book, *Necrom*, is due out in February 1991. □

THE DAYS OF INCREASING AUTOMATION

The house rested in the heat of the late evening. The distant church bell sounded, the notes rolling heavily down along the coast. Only a few hundred feet in front of the house, across the highway, there was the sea.

The roof of the house rested on wooden rafters, which in their turn rested on wooden beams and dark wooden walls, cut from the forest whose fragments gathered around the house this evening. It was the Louisiana summer, and the sun had been hot in the afternoon. The house was moving now; shifting in shadowed corners. Creaking boards touched and complained as they shed the warmth of the day, the roof relaxed and settled on the dry walls, the floorboards yawned into bigger gaps and settled more heavily on the joists. There was little moisture even in the darkest corners of the cellar, where the blind and reeking earth and brick mouldered into each other. Tiny cracks appeared, larger cracks stretched out to each other, hastening their eventual meeting.

The noise of a distant car broke the silence. It was a very long way away, but it grew steadily louder. The door to the house opened, and a woman stepped out onto the verandah. She held the door open behind her for a moment, whilst she listened, head on one side, to the engine sound. She nodded to herself and, shutting the door behind her, stepped forwards to hold onto the balcony. As she waited she kept trying to stifle the great smile that kept forcing itself onto her face.

The car roared up the drive, and skidded into the sand piled up next to the house. Mat and Danny threw open the doors and raced up the dark earth path to the porch verandah, shouting their greetings up to her as she stood in the lamplight, leaning back against a pillar, arms folded, beaming at them.

They vaulted the balustrade of the porch, landing lightly, one after the other, their blond hair and their smooth, suntanned skin and the muscles in their backs carrying them up and over, landing lightly, recovering effortlessly, Mat bowing, laughing, and gathering

**PHILIP
GLADWIN**

her up, embracing and kissing her, spinning her around and laughing.

"Lise, you wouldn't believe it this time – Ali and Kirsty have had twins –"

"Yeah, and they're so beautiful –"

"Yeah, and they've bought an old plot of land out there on the riverbend, you know, back up by the old chapel and ..."

"They want everyone they know to get out there and live there and work the place with them, they got no idea ..."

"Yeah, but we said noway, and then we said, maybe, and then we thought about the summer in California and we could all go over there and ..."

The clamour tumbled into the house. Danny tugged his quiff and was suddenly humble.

"You still got a room here for me, Ma Clinton?"

He laughed as Lise made to swipe him before disappearing up the stairs with his haversack, leaving Mat and Lise to go into the kitchen. Mat struck a match and went around all the oil lamps, lighting them all one by one, dropping the match as it burnt his fingers, talking all the while. He ran to the light switches and turned the main lights off. He finished and turned to Lise for approval, and stopped.

"Ah, shit, I didn't ... How are you?"

"Oh, I'm getting along fine," Lise smiled.

"I'm sorry. But you should've stopped me. When Danny's around I get carried away."

"For Chrissakes Mat! You know that's OK." Lise grinned and opened her arms. They embraced, until Lise pulled away. She looked at him.

"Mat, you've been away a long time. Did you miss me?"

He made no reaction for a moment, and then a grin split his face, and he nodded quickly, silently, and began to kiss her. She sighed, and relaxed on him, laying her head on his shoulder. They stood silent together for a minute. Then there was a crashing from outside. The kitchen door burst open, and Danny fell into the room, red-faced and panting, holding a huge red ice chest with two hands. As he came in he managed to push a case of beers along with a toe. He gave it a final effort and the case slid to a

standstill next to the table.

"OK you two, remember to breathe, now. Hey Mat, are you going to show Lise what you did today? Lise, did you know your old man's a big game hunter?"

Mat leaped up. "Hey, Danny ... Lise, I forgot all about this!"

He took the chest from Danny and hiked a chair out of the way with his foot, letting the chest down on the old wooden table in the centre of the room. He opened it up, and hauled out the fish that was inside, holding it with both hands by its tail, swivelling so Lise could see.

"What the hell is that?" she exploded, laughing. "If you two think you're going to gut a whale all over my kitchen you're going to have to take a long walk."

Mat looked at Danny for a moment, then they both burst out laughing.

"Yeah, she's right Danny," said Mat. "You know how it is with fish scales; they get everywhere. It doesn't matter that it took a day and a half to land, then it killed two of the guys on the boat as it kicked around until I thrashed it with my bare hands and killed it with my teeth – if it makes any sort of mess in here then – ow! – I – Lise!"

He ducked and twisted, face creasing with laughter as Lise picked up a broom and batted at him. She chased him around the table, his hands up, pleading with her. She laughed loudly, excitedly, and swung the broom hard. It connected square in Mat's chest and he back-pedaled, flailing his arms for effect. Then Danny and Lise both shouted and Danny leapt forwards, but Mat evaded them both, tripping backwards over the case of beer. He sat down heavily, with a puzzled expression on his face.

"Hah, see how the mighty fall," crowed Lise. She poked him with the handle.

"You're getting old, man."

Mat stood up, slowly, grinning, rubbing his behind. Then his expression changed and he paused.

"Mat! What is it, Mat?"

His face went blank, and he staggered. He moved his mouth and his throat worked, but there was no sound.

"Mat! For Christ's sake!" Lise screamed. Danny bent, and scooped Mat

up in both arms, grunting with the effort.

"It's alright Lise. Could you go and turn down the bed, Mat needs a rest."

"But?"

"It's OK, really. Look out, here we go!"

Despite her protestations Danny had carried him up, and put him to bed, and cooed over him like a baby. Lise watched this, slowly realising that she was being excluded from something, and went back downstairs. She pulled a bottle out of the crate, cracked it, and sat down carefully at the kitchen table. She took a gulp and smiled slowly. She knew when the day had turned bad; it had been on the way home from town.

She had given up early today, the heat had beaten her. Here, at the salted, sweating edge of America the heat was a real issue for people like her; nowadays the climate was no fun, no fun at all. She had caught the bus back along Ocean Drive. The bus was old, but still gleaming, a great chrome and sunburst parody of the old style trams she remembered. The bus pulled off, coping easily with the pitted highway; they'd ripped out the rails years ago. She had sat and watched the woman across from her. She was old and looked like she had been there for days. It was perfectly possible because the driverless buses cruised day and night, following the same path, stopping for passengers, avoiding other traffic, following the highway code.

Mat had once explained the means by which they, and, she presumed, he himself, navigated, but the details escaped her now.

The woman across from her had taken out a square of silk. She laid it across her knees, and folded it into thirds, lengthwise, then folded it again. She twitched at the hem of her skirt, laying it straight along her legs, and brushed away invisible dust. She spoke quietly to herself as she took one of the corners of the square and shook the folded package out. She laid the square across her knees, and began folding it again.

"– so he gave me pearls an' all, but he wasn't that old, and when he was up and leaving he says, 'Now you be good and sure to call me in writing, y'hear?'"

Lise had looked at the woman's white hair, wisps glued to a taut skull and

listened.

"- ev'ry morning I'd wait for him to show his cheap face; ev'ry morning he'd show, reg'lar as clockwork -"

There couldn't be a bigger tearjerker than this. Age, the real sob story. Didn't affect the bus, though. It had been running this route for as long as she could remember; probably even as long as she and Mat had lived here. Bits dropped off, sure; wheels punctured, chrome rusted - occasionally the engine would steam and seize to a shuddering halt, but that wasn't the point; the brain of the thing went on and on. Like most machines nowadays the bus was an AI - a total moron, a real retard sure enough, but an Artificial Intelligence all the same. It loved to drive, it had a flair for dodging traffic, it adored checking plastic, and, in its own fresh-faced way, it was especially courteous to frail old ladies. Like Lise.

Christ knows, she had been young once, been a toddler, round faced, wondering. She had had fat arms, and legs browned by the sun; every day there was early breakfast with her mother, and then she played in the garden, no taller than the grass and certainly greener, chatting to fieldmice and blackbirds, as unformed as the day. She knew all this - it had all happened to her once - but it all seemed so far away. She and Mat had been a young couple once; had jumped on a bus and quit New York when it seemed inevitable, they could do that then; anything had been possible to her - even keeping up with Mat.

She thought of that trip down from New York, over half a lifetime away. There was a memory, stashed away in the middle like a nugget of gold, of them lying on a grassy bank in the middle of Alabama somewhere whilst the Trailways refueled. They were both dazed by the travel and the heat and Lise had put her head on Mat's chest and gazed at a statue in the centre of the town square. If she thought about it, she could still remember how it had felt. The statue had been beautiful, weathered yet unblemished. Over the years the skill of the sculptor had been enhanced by lichen adding fine, organic detail; adding green feathers to the wings, moss to the hair, green velvet to the gown. The face was upturned, tilting back towards heaven, supplicating, the sinews of the neck standing out in exquisite relief. The up-

lifted hands were delicate, still, pure chiselled stone, long, fine fingers.

Lise remembered how they had waited there in silence for what could have been an age. Every moment the sheer fact of the stone angel had passed more to her, shared more with her, poured strength and courage upon her. She still, after all these years, knew how she had felt, soaking in that experience of perfection free from the confusion of human blood and flesh.

She finished the last of the beer, yawned, and stood up. Of course that was the draw, that was the pull. It was only nowadays that she understood why. She had thought that in some mystical way, if she stayed around him long enough, did as he did, went everywhere with him, then what he had, the perfection of being made, not born, would somehow rub off onto her. But of course it hadn't. And look at tonight. Now she was old, and it was much too late.

She waited. Half an hour passed. She heard talking upstairs, then sudden laughter. Light came down the stairwell as the bedroom door was opened, and Danny came into the kitchen, smiling to himself. She got up, motioned towards the other chair at the table and gave him a beer and the opener. She sat down again in silence, then nodded her head quickly, once, upwards, then got up and fetched him a glass. For the first time she looked at him.

"OK, what's happening here?"

Danny looked surprised. "Eh?"

"With Mat."

Danny paused for a moment.

"Oh, he's fine, really fine, Lise."

"Then what in the hell was going on down here half an hour ago? You do remember it? Machine man swatted by a broom! He tripped over, for Christ's sake - him - Matthew! He should have known that case of beer was there without looking. He ... He collapsed, Danny! He only fell on his ass! He only fell on his ass!"

Her voice trailed off. Danny said nothing. In the silence he pulled the top off the beer and emptied it into his glass. He looked at her and took hold of the bottle top. The soft white belly on the inside of the top still carried the imprint of the rim of the bottle. There were a few strips of

foil sticking and he pulled these off, scratching with his nail. After a while he put the top down and took hold of Lise's hand. She looked up, her face aghast.

"What's happening here, Danny?"

He looked her full in the face.

"He's fine. He's Neo; you know that he can't be anything but fine."

She looked blank, and was silent. She let her gaze drift from Danny's face to his shoulder, to a point far behind the wall of the room.

"Oh, come on Lise, don't get sore. You know I wouldn't bullshit you."

She didn't reply, just stared through his shoulder. He waited, then made to get up. Then he sighed, and sat down again heavily.

"You want another beer?"

He flipped off the top and passed over the bottle. She took it and dribbled it slowly into the glass. They both watched the pale gold stream, and the froth climbing up the side of the glass.

When she spoke it was low and even.

"Danny, I have known Mat for ... oh shit, a lot of years, and I've been married to him for the great majority of them. It's not your standard marriage, I'm not saying that, but as far as it will ever be possible I know him inside out. Over these years I've been ill plenty of times, laid up in bed with head colds, chest colds; broken bones; infections; you name it, if a woman could then I did it. But in all these years, when I've been coughing, sneezing, having fevers, Mat's body has never been an issue. He's still young, you know they're not the same as us - he's got another fifty years at the minimum. Yet tonight; something happened. How come falling on his ass hurt him?"

Danny looked grave. She paused.

"Yeah - and what were you two laughing at just then?"

He looked distracted. "Eh? Oh, I don't know, something Kirsty was doing before we left. Look, don't you and Mat ever talk about things?"

"Yeah, of course we ..."

"Yeah, yeah, I know you joke about it, but don't you ever talk about him, or what the two of you are doing together?"

There was a silence. He looked down

at the table, tracing the grain with his finger. Lise spoke, quietly, then louder.

"When we came down here, all those years ago, we came down here because we thought people down here wouldn't mind. We came down here because you guys didn't have restrictions, zones, licences, all that shit. You didn't have race riots—not that type anyway. Are you telling me that we were wrong? Are you telling me that people around here are starting to care?"

Danny laughed.

"Jesus Christ, people are pretty tolerant nowadays, but as a couple you're not exactly part of the wallpaper. You know, that's funny, I never knew how you two could be so naive as to think that Mat could get away with it down here. Why didn't you stay up there in New York. At least he could have landed a job. Didn't you know that no-one would touch you two down here? At least in NY he could have made some money."

Lise looked at him in disbelief.

"You think this is bad? Wow! You should have seen us in the old days. The problem with New York is that it's a neurotic city. Half the time the energy's feeding you, carrying you: 'Mat's a walking, talking, real life Robot, and isn't that good?! Here guys, take a look.' And half the time that same energy's just tearing you down."

She looked at Danny. "The aggression could be incredible. It's the only place where every party you go they serve people steak. And I mean people steak."

Danny laughed.

"Oh come on!"

"You want to bet? But I tell you, the final straw, the thing that made us actually up and go, was a party."

She shook her head wryly.

"Some party."

Danny waited. She looked back at him.

"Oh, no, no, it's too long ago. No, basically what happened was that we were at what I guess you would call a mixed type party down on the edge of the old Bowery. Good party up till then – Mat and I were so much in love it used to scare me. This party was going on on two levels; there was this enormous loft, four, maybe five times the size of this kitchen.

This guy lived there that we knew. Then there was the roof. It was a flat roof, low balcony, asphalted or something. Anyway, the way up was this ladder, back of the kitchen downstairs, quite hard to find. I think it was that that saved us."

"Saved you from what?"

"At the time there were gangs running all around Manhattan having a load of old fashioned fun, just a-burning an' a-destroying. Some of them were religious, some of them were political. We happened that night to get a standard bunch of crazies who had a grudge against Neo-Humanoids. And were prepared to take it out on anyone who looked like they had done without a mother. And their friends. And their friends' friends come to that. A lot of people got cut up; quite a few of them died. And me and Mat just thought that we would rather not be anywhere near there anymore. So here we are."

She fell silent for a minute or two.

"Anyway, I thought you knew all that. You mean Mat never told you?"

"No. He never talks about New York."

She looked at him.

"Anyway, Danny, I'm going to stop being sidetracked and you are going to tell me what is going on here tonight."

He looked uncomfortable for a minute, then seemed to summon courage.

"I'm talking about you two as a couple."

"What do you mean 'As a couple'?" Lise mimicked him, her mouth twisting as she spoke the last three words.

"Look, I don't want to spell this out, but –"

"Yeah, I know; we're both sixty plus, and I look it and Mat don't. But so what if he's still Body Beautiful? You maybe think it's obscene? What we do at bedtime? You think he should go off down the beach and grab himself a nice looking Neo-chick? Well, screw you."

She stared at him.

"And Danny – what happened tonight?"

"Lise, I don't think anybody should leave anybody. I don't know a better suited couple. But that's not the issue."

"Well, what is?"

"Look, I'm no genius, I never said I was, but I'm not stupid either. I keep clued up; I'm sure you do as well, Lise, but maybe I look a little closer at certain things than you do. Mat told me once that you wouldn't ever talk about him, the real low level him, what he's made of, how he works, moves, thinks. Sure, you joke about it all the time, and you seem really sharp, the two of you, but he said he spent years trying to get you to discuss this. Then he just gave up, thought, maybe you were right, and it didn't matter."

"Danny, get to the point. So Mat's a machine and I'm insensitive and I don't let him pour his silicon heart out any time he feels like it. What has that got to do with him lying up there in bed at the moment?"

"But that is the point. And neither of you are facing it. Mat is not human, and never will be, no matter how much you both selectively forget, and paper over the cracks, and ignore the way he looks. Mat isn't even rare anymore. The fact is ..."

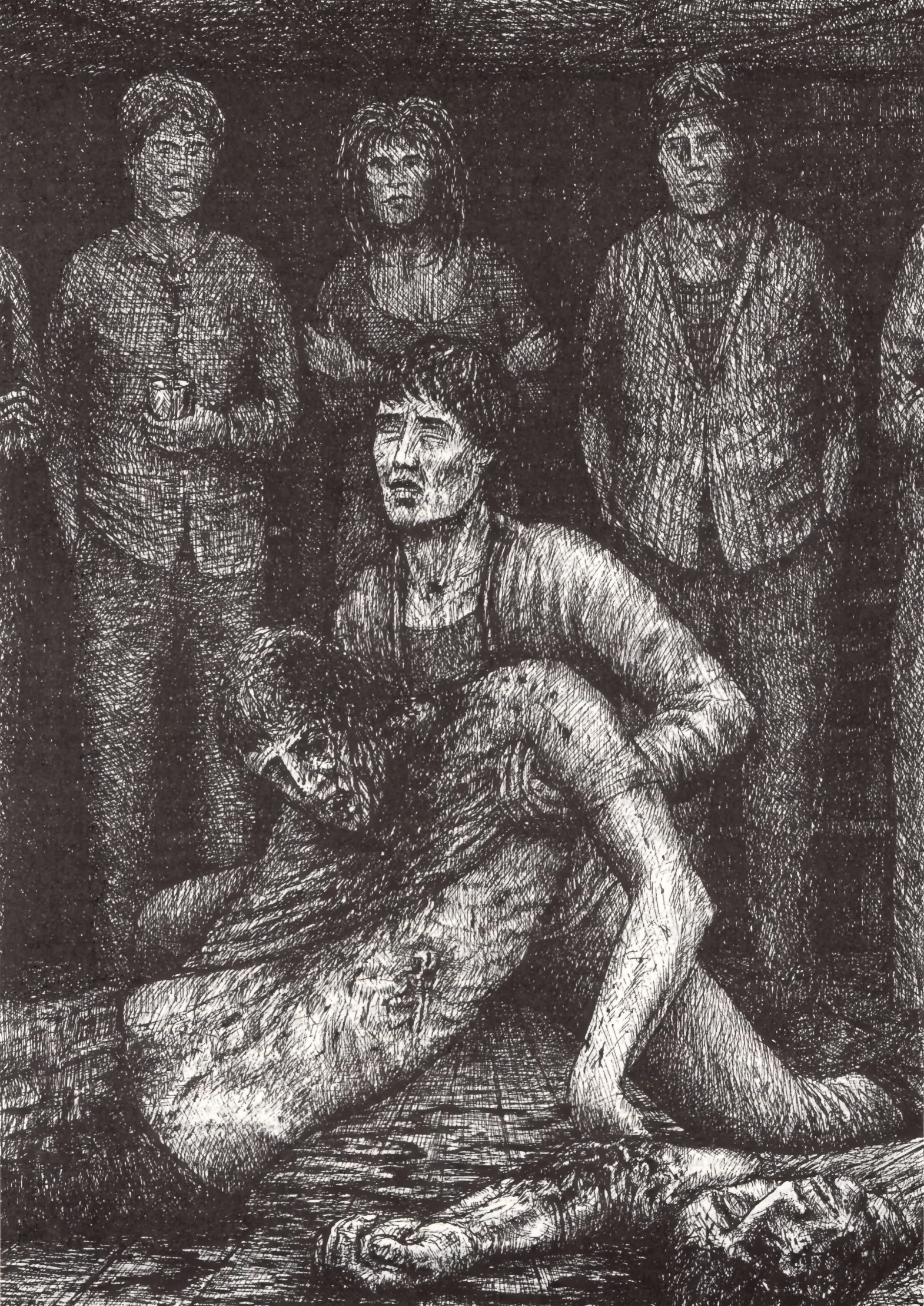
Danny stopped, his mouth dry, licking his lips.

"You are old, and getting older, and Mat hasn't even begun. You mentioned another fifty years. Well that's bullshit. He's facing another century, minimum. Oh, sure, he'll get ageing problems, spare part glitches, like what happened tonight, but he's going to go on and on. Do you know that out of all the thousands and thousands of Neos operational there isn't one who has stopped from old age. No one knows what their real life expectancy is. Latest reports say that even the early prototypes, the crudest lab models, look like they spend their time chewing vitamins and working out. A full-blown system like Mat – well, who knows."

"OK. Big deal. Big ... deal. What has that got to do with tonight? What has that got to do with you? And what the hell has that got to do with anything?"

Lise stood up, grating her chair back over the floor.

"Who the sweet Jesus do you think you are, Danny Katz? I've known Mat since we were both younger than you and don't you tell me that he's a fucking 'system'. Do you think we don't know all this? So we don't talk about it? So we don't invite the neighbours round for



cookies and self discovery? That's because we don't fucking well have to."

She stopped, and screwed a fist into her right eye, knuckling the skin furiously. She sat down.

"Oh, for Chrissakes! Just give me another beer will you, you jerk!"

There was silence. Danny studied the table top. Then he stood up.

"Lise, I'm sorry. I just don't think you should be worried about Mat. The thing is ... The thing is the reason that Mat wanted to take this trip over to California was not just to see Kirsty and everybody: sometimes – just sometimes – I think that he feels you're a hint too ..."

"What?"

"Well, look. Just because Mat still looks like he's 24 years old doesn't mean that he thinks like that you know? Sometimes I think that you should lay off him a little"

"What are you ..."

"Ah, come on, Lise, you know you can be too jealous sometimes. Just give the guy a chance. Look. I know this. I know this because he's told me himself more times than I've listened to it. There are two things he tells me, time after time after time. One: he doesn't have a clue how long he's got left, and Two: he is totally, stupidly, gut-bustingly in love with you. So shape up. And stop doubting the guy. He's your best friend. Believe me."

He waited, but Lise said nothing. He waved a hand in a loose way.

"Yeah, I should have kept my mouth shut. Look, I'm going up to bed now, but don't worry about Mat; he's a lot stronger than we'll ever be."

"Maybe you're right. Oh, it's OK Danny. I'm just a bit depressed at the moment. I mean ..."

Her voice trailed off, and she sat down, looking at the floor.

"Yeah, well anyway, I'm going up to bed now. See you Lise."

He turned at the door and gave her a small smile, then closed the door quietly behind himself. Lise listened to his footsteps recede up the stairs then a pause, and the cistern being flushed. She stood up, and tears formed in her eyes. She walked out onto the verandah and looked out over the road to the beach.

In the bright moonlight the sea was an animate thing, reflecting the bank of grey cloud above. It was the colour of pearl, flat and smooth, a sheen on its skin as it lapped at the sand, separated from the world Lise was in by the thin barrier of dark beachside foliage. She let herself down the steps and walked on down towards the thin strip of sand, pale silver, half glimpsed through the dark undergrowth. She paused when she was buried in the centre of the copse of trees. There, on a bush, was a single flower, a dark, arterial red; edges blackened, but blooming still under the canopy of the dark needles. Here amongst the cypress trees it was almost dark, there were thorns in the undergrowth and the land had grown black. The only thing that was light was the sea. The moon shone down and lit the sea in front of her; a cold flaming path stretching away in front of her. Bright, mysterious, molten silver mirroring the night sky, a contrast with the black of the earth. She stood there for a time.

Memories of the loft party she had told Danny about ran through her head. It was one of the few truly horrific things she had experienced in her life, and she could still, nearly a half century later, feel the strength of the inhumanity expressed that one night.

The voices that were raised and mingled with the music from downstairs hadn't really impinged on the conversation that was going on in the different corners of the darkened roof. Someone over on her left was smoking. She stood on the small wall around the edge of the roof, looking at the lights of the World Trade. She felt a little drunk, but before she had time to call him she felt Mat's arms on her waist, steadying and holding. She was a little surprised, but she was used to being surprised by him; it seemed that it would take forever before she would be used to the things that he could do.

She turned, spinning and falling dizzily into his arms, and he laughed. They kissed, and over his shoulder she saw Peter's head emerging from the trapdoor that led to the downstairs. There was something wrong with his face, she couldn't see clearly what. She kissed Mat again, but losing concentration; there was something wrong with his face. She looked back and saw Peter collapse in slow motion, gripping one of the rusty

old satellite bowls cemented into the roof. People began to gather round him, one by one, in the same dreary slow motion, and someone started screaming. She caught sight of him as the crowd moved apart for a second; she saw the bleeding from the whole of the side of his head. He seemed to give up some gigantic struggle as she watched, and he twisted to the floor, blood flowing dark and freely in the half light.

She turned to Mat without noticing that he was no longer at her side. She had heard him swear a moment or two before when the screaming started, and she turned again to the trap door to see him frantically climbing down, shouting something to some unseen person, suddenly illuminated by a harsh red glare from the room below.

By the time she was allowed downstairs the overhead floods had been turned on, and most of the dead had been wrapped in white plastic refuse sacks, Neos and reals alike. Most of the surviving party goers had left, and the ones that were remaining were sitting talking in low voices in the kitchen amidst the remains of the food, the one place that wasn't streaked with blood. There were still two bodies left uncovered near the rope swing in the centre of the massive attic. They had remained untouched, she supposed, because of the amount of bleeding they had done from their wounds.

The door to the attic burst open, making people jolt with fear, and Mat came in, carrying a bundle of black polythene. He wrestled with each body in turn, slipping in the blood underfoot occasionally, panting as he lifted, once slipping and falling completely across the half-covered figure he held in both arms. As he struggled and swore the people in the kitchen came out and slowly formed a half circle around him, saying nothing and watching as his feet and his knees created a nervous pattern in coagulating blood on the boards of the attic floor.

Later they had talked for a long time. They had decided that night to leave New York and go south, where race killing was almost unknown. It was odd that the south tolerated the AI thing, but Mat said that as long as you were white you could be made from horse shit and they wouldn't care. He didn't let her sleep with him that night because they weren't

sure that all the blood had been washed off. Two days later they were married by a none too fussy registrar down on the edge of Little Italy – and then they had left town.

In the countless revisits to that party Lise had made over the years she had long since found the key to the whole thing. It was not the violence, or the deaths that had offended, it was the attitude of the people there to the bodies, and the blood. Not long before the party she had been in a bar on her own. One Neo, a big evil-looking freak, had been talking to a crowd of reals, said too much and a fight had started. Of course he had stomped all over them; so that by the time the cops had showed he had been able to

get it wrapped as a case of race cruelty and most of the reals in the place were busted. Lise still remembered what he had said that had caused the fight; they had been talking about the new epidemic that was slaughtering the old folk across the city. New York was still hauling itself away from the lymph flu, so this was none too smart in the first place. Then, getting louder, he had said that everyone knew that human blood was no good; it was getting tired, wearing out. Then there was the fight.

She had been foolish, she knew, to have ever believed that Mat's special power could rub off on her. She was only human, and he was the next thing along the line, the next evolutionary stop. He didn't age, he was a bright, shiny, new

thing, and would continue to be until very near his end – whenever that would be. If that would be.

Up above her, in the bedroom of the house, lay Mat, sleepy, enjoying the unfamiliar sensation of bodily pain while it lasted. In his half-awake state he missed Lise, but put it down to the familiar fear of being around her. The 40 years they had spent together, and the slow, unstoppable, almost geological build-up of love between them, did nothing to soften the shock of the years' toll on her body. Almost as he watched her skin loosened, her flesh softened, her hair thinned – and as she went away from him he chased her. With all the superabundance of his eternal youth he pursued her, giving her desperate measures of laughter, excitement, love and constancy. With all the fire at his disposal he held on to her, and held her close, but still she slipped down the abyss. Rage had no effect, pity worse than that. Danny was good to talk to – all friends were a help, but Danny was only 26, and Mat felt the gap of experience and years. Many old men had young friends, but the relationships always had to be uneven – experience and decrepitude ranged against ignorance and vitality, somewhere producing a balance.

But Mat was 65 now and growing older. What would happen when he was 90? Or 120? Could a man who had lived and walked for 150 years even speak the same language as the human race? Deep down he knew there could be no competition.

He saw the retreat into his own kind as inevitable, and he was calm, for somewhere within he knew himself to be around at the start of something big.

Mat lay still, drowsy and on the verge of sleep, yet, as always, fully aware. Aware of the room, the house, and of the earth beneath. Aware of the feel of the sheet on his skin, of the mattress under him. Aware of the constantly flickering network of light in his brain, and, most of all, aware of the man-made heart beating at the centre of his being, pumping youth and strength around his body, beating the unquenchable, unstoppable rhythm of his life. □

An intermittent writer, Philip Gladwin lives in Cambridge with a small and affectionate extra from *Gremlins*.



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Nicholas Royle

De Panne: The Last Resort

For Paul Delvaux

Owing to an irony which he sometimes said could be typical of no government in the world but his own, Havel was permitted to record and perform only *American* jazz. Within this restriction he was limited further to music that was either over fifty years old, or written by a composer now dead. Consequently, he had told Ankers, he was glad of the opportunity to export his own music – his ‘Themes’, as he preferred to call them – on cassette tapes to the Norwegian.

Ankers turned the key in the lock, withdrew the small package from the box and left the post office. Shielding his eyes from the low sun, he slid in behind the wheel of an ageing blue Ford Taunus. He pulled away up the hill, wrestling Havel’s tape out of its packaging and easing it into the cassette player. As it clicked into place, Ankers twisted the volume control, then relieved the Ford’s gearbox by changing up into second.

Havel’s first note drifted out of the speakers just as the Taunus breasted the hill and the pines across the valley came into view. Ankers shifted out of gear and allowed the car to coast.

The notes sounded less like the product of a saxophone than the voice of an alto chorister divested of his church. Ankers shook his head and smiled his disbelief as the



music defied all unwritten theory in its progress from start to finish. It was like getting from one side of a lake to the other without either swimming across it or walking round the edge. Somehow, Havel had discovered new ways of getting from A to B, and there was never any question that B was not exactly the right place to be once he got there.

Listening on the stereo, Ankers could enjoy the music as sound, but to experience the true nature of the Theme, he had to wait until he got home, which wouldn't be until his old car had climbed up the other side of the valley and turned down the unmetalled road to the promontory. The wooden house where he lived with Inger, once he had persuaded her to move south of the Arctic Circle, overlooked the sea. A local proverb had it that on a clear day from this part of Norway you could see the Faeroes. Ankers had found a map which showed that the islands were on the same line of latitude as this stretch of coastline, but he never discovered whether or not the birth of cartography preceded the origins of the saying.

As soon as he got back he put the tape on and played tenor to Havel's alto. The music was written both to stand alone and be one half of an eventual duet.

Whenever Ankers improvised to the Czech's haunting music, he saw visions, like dreams.

This time he was following tramlines. On either side the landscape was vague. As he walked, the sketchy definitions of trees, grassy banks and dunes were gently smudged and erased by dusk. He could barely hear the saxophone music in the background, as if this were a film and that the soundtrack. New, surprising notes threaded themselves into the Theme and he heard his own instrument answering them with counterparts; the music had suddenly become far more complex. Beneath his feet the tramlines had been joined by others merging from both sides. He tripped over points and studied the pattern of rails in order to discern his route out of the junction.

He followed one set of parallel rails that curved out from the ever-widening morass of tracks and headed into the dunes.

The knot of tonal confusion untied itself and long mellow notes followed, sliding over each other: an F from the alto joined by the tenor's G sharp and then a D.

Sand blew over the tracks, shifting occasionally to reveal the gleaming steel still beneath, but eventually burying them, so that he walked into the dunes without a guide.

The apparent source of the music changed. One minute it was the song of a black-headed gull, the next the sea breeze blowing across the mouth of an effluent pipe. Making his own contributions involuntarily, he passed between dunehills anchored by spikes of marram, aiming now for the colonnades and pavilions he could see rising out of the sand in the distance. The three-quarter moon painted the buildings a ghostly grey.

When he got closer he could make out the women. As on every previous occasion they wore few clothes and appeared to be asleep as they walked, eyes wide open yet unseeing, passing each other in groups and some-

times singly. The strange, anachronistic buildings gathered round a square, over which the women crossed back and forth. With their hands they gesticulated and often seemed deep in silent conversation with their companions.

The music now emanated from between the columns of the displaced ruins and monuments.

He approached the edge of the square. On the far side beyond the buildings the sea beat against the shore. As he watched, the waves came in closer and were soon lapping around the crumbling stone pillars that barely held up the roof of an ancient Roman arcade. The women walked on and around unaware.

Trailing behind two women in long dresses decorated with huge bows like mutant butterflies, was the old man. Ankers had glimpsed the old man on earlier visits and only sensed his significance.

Two women walked to the perimeter of the square, just a few metres from the incoming tide, which was now causing the arcade to tremble as it thrashed its supports. The women knew nothing of the danger. The old man's bespectacled face furrowed in concern as he looked towards them; he could see the women and the sea behind them. Was he, too, worried by the sea?

Ankers wanted to run into the square and warn the sleepwalkers, even though he knew they wouldn't see or hear him. Duetting with Havel's previous cassettes, he'd seen the sea gradually advancing, its threat growing each time. This was the first time it had shaken the buildings. He looked around for the old man and just caught sight of him passing behind a dune a hundred and fifty metres inland of the square. Despite the danger to the women, he knew he should follow the old man and so broke into a run.

There was an urgency in the old man's step which allowed him to walk more quickly than Ankers could run. The younger man was less accustomed to the sand; it sucked and dragged at his feet, slowing him down. In the distance a small railway station came into view, partially obscured by its own shadows cast by the moon. The old man climbed into the last carriage of a train which then began to move off, taking the music with it in its siren.

He was painfully aware of the notes fading to near-silence as he strove to run, like treading water, in the direction of the station. The landscape of the vision would vanish as soon as the music finished. He didn't want to leave empty-handed again and not be any closer to answering any of his questions or saving the sleepwalkers from drowning.

The final whispered note floated out into the pallid night as Ankers blinked at the sign which identified the station as De Panne.

He had always been convinced of it; now he knew.

He found De Panne in the atlas. It was a small resort on the Belgian coast. He had never heard of the place before, never been to Belgium, never so much as glanced at a map of the country. De Panne existed. The Roman ruins may have been the imagined remains of some phantom city, but De Panne existed, independent of his fantasy.

Havel could not be persuaded to jump the Czech border into Germany or Austria, but Ankers was determined

that the man should meet up with him in Brussels, so that they could go together to De Panne. In the end it required a forged invitation from the American Jazz Festival of Belgium, upon receipt of which Havel was able to make an official request for a temporary exit visa.

Ankers met Havel's train at the lugubrious Gare du Nord in Brussels. They left the station to catch a tram.

"This is slower than the trams in Prague," Havel grumbled. "And the city is less beautiful."

Ankers wondered how they were going to get on. The man had often shouted at him down the telephone that the Czech government was wicked and corrupt, their laws were Kafkaesque and the secret police brutal beyond comparison.

"But, er ..." Ankers tapped Havel's saxophone case.

"Yes, I know, Ankers," said the Czech, "I know. Here I can play what I like." He smiled ironically.

"You did want to leave Czechoslovakia?" Ankers asked.

Havel paused a moment, then said in an ambivalent tone: "Yes. Yes, I did. I said so many times, I believe."

Ankers motioned to Havel to rise from his seat. They stood holding poles by the concertina doors. Havel *had* said so, often. Ankers glanced at the inscrutable Czech and hoped he'd done the right thing by orchestrating his departure from the country. He remembered, though, that Havel was here officially; the man had a visa.

"You can always go back," he said, as they stepped down onto the pavement, "if you don't like it."

"Yes, I can go back," he replied sombrely. "Within seven days."

Ankers led the way up the street, feeling hurt, and not a little foolish.

Havel was several glasses of beer jollier soon after they'd reached the Hotel Van der Griend and located the bar.

When the proprietor saw that they carried music cases he demanded to know what instruments they played. He was a tall thin man with fine, boyish features and a woollen scarf tied around his neck, which seemed incongruous indoors. They told him their cases contained saxophones and he pleaded with them to give a recital. The barman, a handsome, thick-haired Scot, spoke up, refusing to serve any more drinks until they played.

Ankers was very reluctant. "I don't usually perform," he protested feebly.

Havel clapped him on the back, grinning. "Come on, Ankers," he boomed. "Do not be so shy. We must oblige our hosts." So saying he unsnapped his case and slipped into the melody line of W.C. Handy's *Ole Miss*. After seven bars Ankers took up the harmony.

They played for an hour or more, drinking steadily and delighting the proprietor, his barman and several guests who drifted into the bar. Not once, however, did they play anything remotely modern. The Czech authorities would definitely have approved.

Owing to disruption on the railways, they did not reach De Panne until the evening of the next day.

Investigation of the immediate area produced no clues. The sea front in particular was disappointing, there being few dunes and no traces at all of either Roman-style buildings or naked, wide-eyed sleepwalkers. Inland the town was moribund. The two jazzmen returned to the railway station and loitered on the platform.

Havel had been quiet for most of the day, not even returning Ankers' occasional glances.

Ankers leant back against a pillar and pictured Inger: her hair the colour of arctic sand, eyes turquoise as a puffin's. Every time he left their house for more than two days, he secretly feared she would leave and go back to the freezing town of Narvik, where she claimed the air was purer and the light closer to what God had intended.

The night was disturbed by a long, low wail, which made Ankers think of the seals he'd seen Inger observe longingly as they gathered in the rocky inlet below their house. He looked up and saw Havel a hundred metres down the platform, his alto sax hovering under the dot of his mouth like an inverted question mark. Ankers stretched out an arm towards his case and within half a minute was breathing into an F which fitted snugly under Havel's A flat.

The music meandered. Only when the two instruments tried to play the same note and had to dart away to opposite ends of the scale – like two trains attempting to enter a tunnel on the same track and both disrailing to mount the embankments on either side – did Ankers accept that they were playing one of Havel's Themes. Even when it appeared to be in trouble, the harmony did not go astray. The two men continued to improvise. At times Ankers took the lead, at the invitation of the other man.

Since the vision did not come immediately, Ankers closed his eyes to speed its arrival. When nothing came and he opened his eyes again, he caught sight of an old man passing on the other side of the road from the railway station. He saw him soon enough, before the man disappeared around the corner, to recognise his preoccupied look and the circular lenses of his spectacles.

Havel looked over to see why Ankers had stopped playing.

"Come on. Quickly," shouted the Norwegian, shoving his saxophone into its case and jumping across the tracks. Havel followed.

Rather than catch up with the old man, they elected to fall back and see where he would lead them. Soon the surroundings became familiar to Ankers, as they once again quickened their step to keep the old man in sight amongst the dunes. Havel still claimed not to have experienced anything like the visions Ankers had described to him.

As soon as the ruins and the square came into view, Ankers could see that the sea had advanced considerably; the most vulnerable buildings were already waterlogged and high waves had begun crashing down on the steps and columns of monuments which before had been left dry.

Twenty-five metres from the edge of the square Ankers tasted salt. He stopped when he reached a long colonnade. One of the women was walking directly towards him. She was naked, but his gaze did not move from her eyes: wide

like saucers they seemed to behold him, betraying no sign of acknowledgement or, indeed, life. Only metres away, yet separated from him by more than the width of ancient colonnade, she lifted her arms into the air, spelling signs from a meaningless language with her slender hands. In the moonlight, she looked pale as a shop-window mannequin; her eyes might have been glass. But her fair hair lifted by the wind off the sea as she turned was as real as Inger's.

She was joined by a woman in a red velvet dress and the two of them walked along the line of crumbling pillars in the direction of the surf. Bubbles of froth landed on their shoulders and caught in their hair, but they only turned away when the perimeter of the square allowed them to go no further towards the sea.

Ankers looked across the square and saw Havel on the far side, stepping into the path of an advancing group of women. Beyond Havel the figure of the old man could be seen walking back into the dunes.

"We must follow him," Ankers panted, as he drew level with the Czech. Together, despite Havel's reluctance, they hefted their cases and set off in pursuit.

"There is something in their eyes," Havel said. "Some kind of sadness."

Ankers commented: "It seems to me more like absence."

"Like me," Havel continued, "they are in exile."

"Oh, shut up, Havel!" Ankers marched on ahead. Something apart from the plight of the sleepwalkers was troubling him and had been since before his frustrating encounter with the fair-haired woman. In the circumstances, Havel's precocious impressions of exile were irritating.

They followed the old man until he eventually disappeared into a sprawling, single-storey building. Finding no obvious trace of the old man's entrance route, they investigated the rear of the building and came up with an unlocked door.

To allow their eyes to become accustomed to the darkness, they waited in the gloomy corridor for a few moments. There were no sounds to be heard in the darkness. The moon, just a sliver shy of full, cast a ghastly pallor on the far end of the corridor, by means, they discovered when they felt their way down there, of a skylight. The next corridor led into a room, again lit only by moonlight, but its windows were generous, so Ankers and Havel could not only see that the walls were hung with paintings, but were able to make out their subjects.

Every painting featured women, eyes wide and apparently walking in their sleep, most of them naked and awash with moonlight. A group of women stood around another woman lying on the ground; in the background a mysterious stand of trees. One woman wearing a dress saw herself naked in a mirror. Women walked through a forest where giant plantains grew among the trees. Women and men, mostly unclothed, thronged about a bespectacled old man against a background of ancient buildings. A dark-haired woman lay on a chaise longue, exposing herself to the dress-maker's dummy which stood at its end.

The next room had women in railway-station waiting rooms, crossing tramlines, watching signals change. After

that the women were almost always close to the sea: walking through uncompleted cities bordered by dunes, patrolling desolate colonnades, faced with staircase after staircase leading only to the sea.

Ankers exchanged a look with Havel. The Czech seemed deeply disturbed. He mumbled something and glanced at the floor. Ankers was already heading out of the room into another corridor.

The door at the end opened into an artist's studio. Canvases were everywhere, propped up against the wall and hanging on it, leaning against an unmade bed and even wrapped in a tangle of sheets. Moonlight was shed by an enormous skylight and equally large windows. The two men dropped their cases on the floor.

The old man looked up only briefly from his easel, which held a canvas bigger than any they had seen so far.

"I am almost at the end of possibilities," the old man announced in French. "I don't know if I can save them."

Havel followed Ankers when he stepped over to the painter's side of the easel. The canvas was a jumble of numbers, painted with a very fine black brush. There was more order, however, than there at first appeared: the numbers were arranged in columns and they all had two decimal places. 21.14, 03.22, 09.37, 16.43 ...

"It's the time," Havel murmured.

"Times. Going back years," Ankers said in a whisper. "It's a tide table."

"It will not work," said the artist. "But I must finish it anyway."

"You're trying to change the tides," Ankers exclaimed.

"After this," the artist declared in a thin voice, "there is only a last resort."

Ankers leaned closer to study the progression of numbers on the canvas. The painter dabbed his brush on the black smudge of his palette and added more minuscule numbers to the list.

Shadows moved around the studio as the moon arced across the skylight and Ankers sat watching the painter. He was barely aware that Havel had taken out his saxophone to begin playing mournful asides, and even less aware of his own actions as he reached for his own instrument and joined in.

Battering against the ancient square the waves had increased in force and depth. Though frequently splashed in the face, the women did not awaken, but walked on and around in several centimetres of water. Ankers noticed a new intensity in Havel's playing, belying a vacant, lost look in his eyes. In the square Ankers caught sight of the fair-haired women whose vulnerability had moved him, and stopped playing.

In the studio alone with the painter, Ankers knew that rewriting the tide table could not reverse such a dramatic rise in sea level. The women would drown in their sleep.

"I had to finish it just to see," said the old man, replacing the large canvas with one of medium size. From where he stood, Ankers could not see what, if anything, was on the

new canvas. "The last resort," the painter said, smiling.

Ankers moved to the old man's side and surveyed the canvas now on the easel.

The wind freshened, blowing his hair back from his forehead. With the back of his hand, Ankers wiped salty spray from his lips.

For the first time since he had seen them, the women, now that they were swimming in the sea, seemed to have shaken off the veil of sleep. Their hands, no longer gesticulating in a void, touched and held onto each others'. Occasionally, their large tail fins broke the surface and thrashed the swell playfully.

The distance between them and Ankers was growing as they swam further out, but he thought he could see a smile on Havel's face again. It seemed right that the exiled man should be allowed to go with them.

He scanned the women's faces again, those he could see through the distant choppy waves, searching to ascertain if he had only imagined one particular face in the bottom corner of the artist's canvas. A face with turquoise eyes and hair like arctic sand. □

Nicholas Royle has sold more than 35 short stories to a wide variety of publications including *Fear*, *Interzone*, *New Socialist* and *Reader's Digest*. He has also appeared in *Year's Best Horror* in the USA and *Best New Horror* in the UK.

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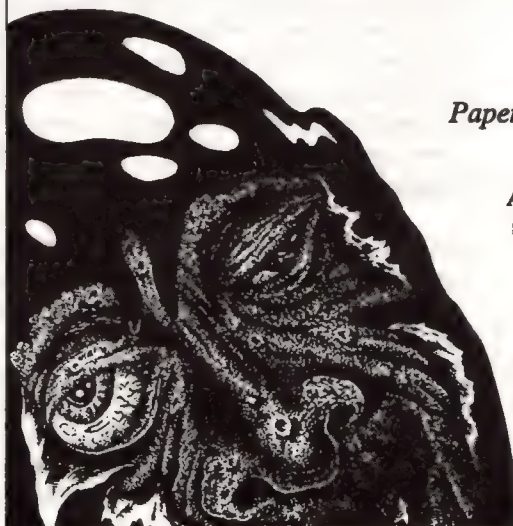
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SUPERHORRORS

A look at what lies behind the
fiction of Ramsey Campbell.
Interview by Andy Darlington.

First the calm ...

But you know from the moment you key the ignition, it's all going to change.

Sliding through the long luminous tube of the Mersey Tunnel. Past the never-ending white repetition of the Wallasey cemetery. And the deceptive quiet streets run in ripples down to the mudslick slur of the Mersey. While on the horizon, the black outline of the Liver-buildings' grotesque birds of prey. The garden is loose and undisciplined, beyond the shade and soft oozing mush of pathway Ramsey Campbell's firm handshake lures you in. You've seen the photo in gore-mags, the reality is fuller-fleshed, more solid, more real. Affable, voluble, no trace of the macabre, eldritch, or the gut-churning, yet. We opt for the study upstairs; the habitat, the lair, the work environ.

He slumps down into a swivel chair before the lip of the desk and the loom of the word-processor. Cups a Heinemann beaker of coffee in both hands. Wears a black *Believers* sweatshirt, the white lettered 'V' of which is elongated into an extended knife-point, the tip blood reddened. These are merchandising loot from his twin obsessions; the slash-'n'-burn hardcore horror books he writes, and the movies he reviews for Radio Merseyside.

First the calm ...

Can this really be the man responsible for perpetrating themes ripe with mutilation as *The Doll Who Ate His Mother*? A novel which opens with the discovery of an autowreck victim's missing arm, and then moves inexorably into a quest for the satanic 'doll' of black magician and Crowleyesque occultist John Strong? "In a world where a man can believe he was achieving such horror" divulges the text, "anything was possible".

While Campbell, apparently on some infinitely less malign plane, is reeling off neat anecdotes about the time he interviewed Frank Zappa for a proposed radio slot – "he was fine, very articulate, as you would imagine. Perfectly friendly. We talked for half an hour, then I got the tape back to the car and switched it on. *Nothing!* I realized I'd forgotten to turn the microphone on!"

Then you glance over his shoulder as he swivels. On the wall is Oliver Hunter's original artwork for Campbell's *The Face That Must Die*, a lacerated straight-razor

slashed collage of screaming facial atrocity. And yes – this is Ramsey Campbell.

Regularly racked up with the Clive Barkers, James Herberts and Stephen Kings, Campbell is a Horror writer with a narrow, focussed, highly concentrated style. His writing – to Barker, is quite simply "the pure stuff" (*Skeleton Crew* #5).

"I don't think there are any limits to Horror Fiction," he explains. "For me, if you *need* to show something, you show it. And you show as much as you *need* to show. It's more *why* you're showing than *what* you're showing. And therefore I don't think there's *anything* I would necessarily not try and talk about. What I find bothersome is that we've had – for a while – the kind of mindless escalation whereby you show something, you do the most outrageous thing you can, then somebody else says 'what can I do that's *more* outrageous and more disgusting? We gotta build on what this guy did last time', and so it goes on and on. This can become pointless. But the field has its own built-in surfeit factor. When people have had enough of it they are going to turn away from it.

"What's useful is the reaction you tend to get from folk who then say 'let's see what happens if we do *less* than this'! It's happened in the past, I'm sure it will happen again – or, I'm sure it never ceases happening. Is less more? It can be in some instances, not in others. For me, there are no limits to what you can talk about. The fundamental appeal of the field for me, and the reason I continue to write it, is because it allows me to talk about anything I want to talk about. Any theme I want to.

"So no, I honestly don't think there are any limits for me. The only limits that exist are those that exist for any writer; because there are limits in the terms you yourself deal with the material. My own feeling is that I've got some kind of innate sense of taste; that sounds bloody pompous doesn't it? But what more can I say? There is this odd notion that there are writers who are very subtle and very restrained, and there are other writers who are very explicit and very harsh. It seems to me that more often than not this division occurs within the same writer. The funny thing is, I suppose, I've always tended to do both ..."

The Horror story has a long and grisly history. One that predates Science Fiction. Indeed, Brian Aldiss famously asserts that SF is itself the mutant spawn of Gothic Horror in general, and of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* in particular. And if present book-sale trends persist, Horror looks likely to outlast SF too. Certainly bookshops

are increasingly subject to gore-infestations of stomach-convulsing proportions; a fair percentage of which is unleashed by this genial anecdotist – Ramsey Campbell.

But, although bracketed into Horror's New (Shock) Wave, he's no iconoclast. He sells his grim fiction of unease, sure, in enviable quantities. But he does it for love – obsessive love.

To me, hunting definition, SF tends towards the rational and logical cosmic-view, a scientific – or at least pseudo-scientific 20th Century bias. "Sure, indeed," he blinks heavily behind steel-rimmed glasses.

Whereas Horror tends towards the irrational side of the psyche. But answers some deeper more primal needs in its readers, and writers. "Yes it does. Why that should be is a complicated question I suspect. It's certainly got a complicated answer."

There's been a major resurgence in the popularity of Horror in recent years, which has almost taken over where SF left off. As though – for whatever reason – people can no longer believe that science has all the answers. A perceptible swing back to the ...

"... to the irrational. Yes. You're certainly right. And I find that disturbing, because where I'm certainly interested in the irrational as a way of perceiving, I'm somewhat bothered by the rush to embrace it. I hope that what I'm doing is *not* doing that. What I hope I'm doing is trying to make you look again at things you have taken for granted (I say 'you', but by you I mean *you* the reader). Certainly that includes re-examining the lure of irrationality. Some of my books are specifically about that gullibility, and that compulsion to embrace some kind of system of belief that will make sense of the world – at the expense of giving up your right to question. It may be fundamentalism, as in *The Hungry Moon*, or it may be schizophrenia as in *The Face That Must Die*. Both seem to me to represent ways of reshaping the world at the expense of the world.

"It seems likely, and it disturbs me, that as the millennium approaches, we are going to get more and more people who need an answer, some kind of talisman to protect them. I've got a horrible feeling that as world disasters come along we are going to have more and more people springing up saying 'look at the way the world is going wrong, this is because the millennium is approaching, and here is the answer. You'd better get it while there's still time'. I haven't really written about this to any extent, although *The Hungry Moon* touches on it.

"But yes, I find the swing towards the irrational a disturbing thing, and this is one of the reasons I try to make my fiction *announce* itself as fiction, so as to keep the reader in some kind of critical position. This is particularly true in *The Hungry Moon*, where on the one hand you've got the fundamentalism that the book pretty well criticizes; but equally if I'd proposed a *different* system of belief set up as an acceptable alternative then the book might very well have been proposing the occult as the answer. The fact that there's a strong level of absurdity when the supernatural manifestations come in is my – if you like – my nudge to the reader."

"Sunlight slipped through to Birkenhead and Wallasey, touching up the colours of microscopic streets ..."



Time for some product endorsement at FantasyCon

His short story "Calling Card" was written in response to an invitation from the *Liverpool Daily Post* to submit a story for their Christmas issue. They subsequently rejected it as "too gruesome for the paper to publish".

When Campbell compiled *The Gruesome Book* for Piccolo in 1983 – an anthology ostensibly for children – he selected August Derleth's "The Extra Passenger", Robert Bloch's "Hobo", Henry Kuttner's "The Graveyard Rates", plus "Calling Card" and more classics of the macabre from

Brian Lumley and Richard Matheson. In his introduction he recalls, "I began reading Horror stories when I was eight or nine years old, and then I read every Horror book I could get hold of. Whenever I read one that was aimed at young people – it wouldn't be called Horror fiction, just ghost stories, spooky tales – I wished I hadn't bothered. Those books wouldn't have scared a neurotic 3-year-old". Even then he was after the harder stuff. The stories to scare the flesh off you.

"I wanted to write supernatural fiction which had a basis in contemporary psychology, which had a particularly contemporary landscape, a contemporary urban landscape. I wanted to write about Liverpool"

What does such an early compulsion betray about the psychology of the reader? A deep macabre streak? "It could well be. You would think so. I'd actually got into people like M.R. James, La Fanu, Poe, and so forth when I could have been no more than eight or nine, when I was able to borrow books of 'ghost stories', as they were then generally packaged, from the Adult Library – using my Mother's ticket. But going back even further, my earliest memories as a young child are of being frightened and disturbed by what I read. The very first was a *Rupert Bear* annual!, a story in which Rupert goes off into the woods with his parents to get themselves a little sapling – standard Christmas tree type. They bring it home, put it in a tub. Later on Rupert wakes in the night, hears something creeping around downstairs and looks out the window to see a silhouette dancing away across the landscape. Going downstairs he finds the tub empty and there's a trail of earth leading out of the front door. He follows the trail to find the tree going back to where it came from. It seems a fairly innocent thing for kids, but I remember lying awake in absolute terror for nights on end after having read that. So much so that it's stayed in my mind for nearly 40 years.

"I finally managed to turn it up again in a book dealer's quite recently, and this image of this wretched tree with its gnarled legs up against the sky with the moon in the background is actually pretty well as nightmarish as I remember. It's a classic ghost story image, isn't it? The trail of earth and the silhouette you don't quite see, the scrabbling and creaking sounds in the night; it's all standard stuff. It was a very small step from that to reading M.R. James. I also remember seeing an issue of *Weird Tales* in a newsagent's window and thinking 'I want this, I want this magazine'. I could be no more than six then I suppose, but the image on that cover also stayed with me for years; a kind of bird-like creature in the foreground of the composition, and in the background, on a kind of black desert, there were two creatures with rudimentary bodies but large heads that were like disproportionately large skulls. Those 'skulls' clearly knew what they were about, they were coming for this unfortunate bird which was in a state of abject terror in the front of the picture. And this image stayed with me as something I wanted.

"When I was about ten I began collecting *Weird Tales*. Those were the days of the sixpenny remainders, you could go into any small newsagent and find cartons of *Amazing*, *Fantastic*, and *Weird Tales*. *Weird Tales* was the one I particularly wanted to collect. Years later – ten years probably – I actually tracked down that particular issue and

discovered what it was I'd seen on the cover. Actually, it's a vulture perched on some bones with two skeletons in the background. That's actually *all* it is. So there's a sense in which my imagination was already picking up on this material when I was too young to buy it, and I was already telling my own stories and creating my own improvisations on it. If there had to be one moment where I said 'this is where I began as a Horror writer' then perhaps this was where my career began – at that moment ..."

But why the lure of the dark side, the swing to the irrational? Were you a screwed-up kid?

An explosion of laughter – "well, I think that we can agree, that given my childhood, I probably was. You don't want me to repeat the entire introduction to *The Face That Must Die* here, do you?"

The introduction – "At the Back of my Mind", added to the 1983 edition – is a stark exercise in psychological striptease. Cutting away through traumas to reveal the autobiographical inputs to his horrifically paranoid character, John Horridge.

"My father was a literally monstrous figure," he adds more quietly. "In the sense that I never came face to face with the man. He was simply the sounds on the other side of the door. A thing I lay in bed awake at night in panic anticipating. The footsteps coming upstairs and so forth. While my mother clearly had a strange skewed view of the world. Later I was to discover it, or identify it as being clinical schizophrenia. But at a very early age I was developing the skill of separating out that what she said and saw wasn't necessarily what I was seeing at the same time. Clearly there were perceptions of hers that were not real, things which were objectively different. It became instinctive, a way of sorting out what was different between her perceptions and mine. To make the choice of which was real. So in that sense, the problem of talking about a 'screwed-up' childhood is that, yes – it's probably true ..."

Although he hits the Horror throttle harder than most, Ramsey Campbell is a respecter of the Horror tradition, a literary writer well aware of his precedents. A writer who pays his dues by acknowledging his influences. *The Height of the Scream* is dedicated to Robert A.W. Lowndes and Lin Carter. *Ancient Images* to Forrest Ackerman (whose *Famous Monsters* magazine "acquainted me with Karloff and Lugosi"). *Cold Print* to Fritz Leiber and Robert Bloch "who were there before me ..."

"... and did it better," he completes the quote.

Many of those influences wrote on the faultline between Horror and SF. Equally well-known across genre borderlands. "Very much so." But more specifically Campbell wrote "the first book of H.P. Lovecraft's I read, made me into a writer," yet many of Lovecraft's themes can also be read as SF, even without substituting too many of Lovecraft's 'eldritch' adjectives.

"Lovecraft was crucial to me. He was a model of structure. I still *do* regard him as one of the most interesting

and important writers in the field this century. Whatever one may say against him, when you strip away all the things people parody – the bunches of adjectives, the heroic metaphors and so forth – there's still a tremendous sense of structure and orchestration he utilizes to achieve his end. In the best of his stories he does it as well and better than anybody else. But again – of course, he's coming from people like Blackwood and Machen and trying to improve on them as models. I'd spent years just sticking bits of stories together very indiscriminately, until I got myself a complete Lovecraft collection. *Cry Horror* it was, which came out here in 1960. I read through that and I just imbued myself with Lovecraft for about a year. I just used him as a model as thoroughly as possible.

"I suppose it's a question of feeling an affinity. If I was that steeped in Lovecraft there had to be some affinity somewhere. In a sense I was seeing things in the way Lovecraft would see them. I would actually see ruined towers and steps leading down into cellars in the way that Lovecraft would undoubtedly have perceived them. There are things about Lovecraft and the atmosphere of his writing which I like a lot, there are still images which I find tremendously powerful. I re-read *The Colours Out of Space* just recently to do an essay for the centenary, and it still stands as an extra-ordinarily powerful and detailed story.

"So I was using Lovecraft as a model *because* he had so much to offer *me* – as a reader. But there's nothing wrong with using a model in order to learn, to hone and perfect your craft while you're still learning what you yourself want to talk about. The progression I always quote – if I can get this one right! – is that Beethoven's first symphony sounds like Haydn, Wagner's first opera sounds like Beethoven, the first Richard Strauss opera sounds like Wagner, and early Bartok sounds like Richard Strauss. But you wouldn't mistake any one of those for anyone other than himself."

Campbell's Lovecraft-centred oeuvre was collected in *Cold Print* (Grafton, 1987), opening with "The Church in High Street", his first-ever sale – to August Derleth for the 1962 Arkham House tome *Dark Mind, Dark Heart*. An amazingly well-constructed piece of work.

"It's kind of you to say so, though it's only fair to point out that Derleth bought a group of stories including "The Tomb-Herd" (as it was then titled) on the proviso that he could edit it as he saw fit. Which he duly did. He sent me the typescript of what he'd done, and it's fair to say he didn't do too much with the construction, but a lot with the pacing. There were whole sections of the story which ground to a halt while I did yet another atmospheric description ..."

In "Chasing the Unknown" (the introduction to *Cold Print*) Campbell explains how Derleth also "told me to abandon my attempts to set my work in Massachusetts", the traditional mythos prowling ground. Derleth responds in *The Trail of Cthulhu* (Panther, 1976) by billing "J Ramsey Campbell, who constructed an entire milieu in England paralleling the Arkham-Dunwich-Kingsport setting in Massachusetts".

The resulting series of stories break out from the

unlikeliest angles, from perverse passions to shady blades of blackness, from Temphill, a 'decaying Cotswold town', to inevitably the terrain he knows best: Liverpool. The first book, linking Lovecraftian shorts, was *The Inhabitant of the Lake*, published when Campbell was just 18, and the contents still stun. The haunting title-story image of the city from space beneath the lake, and the glimpses of black worlds visited by "The Insects of Shaggai" echo not only Lovecraft, but William Hope Hodgson in their vast dark intensity; a hard-edged weird-to-infinity prose.

"Although that very first story was edited by Derleth, the stories in the *Inhabitant* weren't. He left them alone. He changed the odd word here and there, but that was all. Those were the final drafts as I wrote them when I was – well, I'd be 17 or so when I finished them. But I think it's true to say that in some of those stories, even in that first book, you can sense my growing impatience with the model. "The Horror from the Bridge" was an attempt to do a story based fairly solidly on the chronology of *The Dunwich Horror*, so you've actually got the story happening pretty well within the same time-frame. But after a while I got bored with it, and the story does tend to rush towards the end. And clearly there is a sense in which I began to feel 'well ... there are other ways of doing this kind of fiction'."

Demons by Daylight, the second book – another short story compilation, tried to escape Lovecraftiana, the 'Elder Gods', and excessive adjectives of the 'ululation' variety – "to show my struggles to be myself".

"I'd been reading pretty widely in the contemporary novel. I was reading lots of Graham Greene, lots of Iris Murdoch, Nabokov – who particularly was a kind of revelation to me because he demonstrated that you could do all sorts of things with style besides going straight forwardly at the material. I found that tremendously liberating and wanted to try to do that myself. I wanted to write supernatural fiction which had a basis in contemporary psychology, which had a particularly contemporary landscape, a contemporary *urban* landscape. I wanted to write about Liverpool. Of course, it wasn't the *complete* departure I intended it to be, there are still roots in Lovecraft. It's never left me completely." Derleth accepted the second collection for Arkham House publication, but died before it reached print.

Following Derleth's death Campbell returned to Lovecraft yet again to edit *New Tales of the Cthulhu Mythos* – an uncompleted Derleth project for Arkham House – in 1980; by which time new horizons had opened.

"Not long after I'd gone full-time as a writer in mid-'73, pretty well on the basis of *Demons by Daylight* and Ted Klein's essay about it, I discovered that there

**"I actually
wish people
would find my
books
funnier"**

really wasn't any market for short Horror stories any more. So I was having to try other things ..."

A short story – "The Childish Feast" – was blurbed as a 'Fantasy Extra' on the cover of *Alien Worlds* (2s 6d), the first and only issue of Manchester's SF magazine in 1966. Further shots at the SF market followed, including a sale to *New Writings in SF* 26 (Corgi, 1975), series editor Ken Bulmer writing prematurely "Campbell has had much published in the Lovecraftian tradition, a background he has now outgrown"! "Murders" is a densely plotted media future-world of Holoshows, Tridis, Tele-

path talk-shows, and 'Thrones' – feelies to make fantasies real – and their relationship to the rather more dark compulsions of fanaticists, like murder. He contributed a story to the *Tales from the Forbidden Planet* project, alongside Moorcock and Aldiss; and wrote a series of tales in the Robert E. Howard/Conan mould – currently being re-serialized by *Fantasy Tales* magazine, starting with the fine "The Sustenance of Hoak".

"Those were all written in the mid- to late-'70s – and, as with the Science Fiction stories, the few which actually surfaced are the best, *believe me*. So don't ask me to show you any of the others! But I did a few Sword & Sorcery stories. Equally the short stories in *Dark Companions* and

Dark Feasts were essentially an attempt to do sort of Horror Comic tales. Very terse, and with some kind of twist in the tail. So I was actually trying all sorts of different things for a while there. Of course, one other thing I tried was novels – and that's where I went from there ..."

The novels, uneven in quality, never less than readable, came as if he wrote them on steroids. At best their fractured convolutions of plot feed raw nerve ends through the shredder, and shift your centre of gravity with psychic shocks that radiate as lethally as shafts of barbed glass. While even at their most pedestrian they still move with greater speed, elegance, and lyrical violence than most Horror writers do at their most viscerally accomplished.

The case-hardened psycho-drama *The Face That Must Die*, originally published in abbreviated form in 1979, is now available with the exorcised drug-trip chapter restored in the 1990 Futura edition. The powerfully disturbing *The Doll Who Ate His Mother* – from Bobbs-Merrill in 1976 – was denied British publication until Legend's 1987 launch. *The Parasite* (aka *To Wake The Dead*), *Incarnate*, *Obsession*, and *The Nameless* came from Grafton.

Then there's *The Hungry Moon*, *The Influence*, and one of my favourites – *Ancient Images*, an artful splicing of the real and the fictional, drawing on Camp-

bell's passion for movies with, as *Fangoria* reported, "the best premise for a Horror novel in many a hungry moon". A plot concerning film editor Sandy Allen and his quest for a 50-year-old film-print of *Tower of Fear* starring Bela Lugosi and Boris Karloff. A print that is itself a thing of fear and evil ...

There are also various short story collections and anthologies; and most recently, published simultaneously in September 1990, came *Midnight Sun* (MacDonald), in which the mechanisms of apocalypse take on awesome hues, and the more whimsical novella *Needing Ghosts* from Legend.

"I like *The Face That Must Die* because, for all its occasional attempts to be a conventional suspense novel, it doesn't compromise, I like that about it. Its real strength, in my own view, the *real* horror of the book is not the violence but the sense of how it would be to be John Horridge *all the time*, moment to moment. *This* is what it would feel like. *That's* what I wanted to get. *That's* why so many publishers said 'my god, we can't touch this!', because it's so bleak ... I like *Ancient Images*, because it does ultimately turn out to be what I wanted it to be, an attempt to do a M.R. Jamesian-structured novel. I think it reasonably achieves something like that.

"But in one sense, the favourite book is always the last, the most recent, or even the one you're writing *now*. You try not to repeat yourself. You try to do something new. Therefore you hope that the new one is going to be the most *new*, if you like. I am very fond of *Midnight Sun*, which is a lot bleaker and more visionary. I think I'd stand by that. And *Needing Ghosts*, which took just six weeks to write. After a few days of just setting the scene I actually found myself getting up in the morning thinking 'I've got to find out what happens next. I can't wait. This is amazing. *What – my God!!!*'. I'm sitting there writing it and chortling away and gasping. It just went off like a rocket. The final draft is very lightly edited. In some way it – and *Midnight Sun* – are companion pieces. In a sense they're both about writers and writing. Both of them have a protagonist who has something to do with writing. And both of them, if you like, are a kind of metaphor for the creative process, and the way it consumes everything around it. But in other ways they're quite different. *Needing Ghosts* is psychological and, in my opinion, bizarrely comic. Although obviously it depends on your sense of humour. I actually wish people would find my books funnier. I think *Needing Ghosts* has got more gags in it. I only hope they come out ..."

"But for want of a typewriter, Ramsey Campbell might well have emerged at birth with an essay on the darker side of life in the womb," opines Clive Barker.

Ramsey Campbell; a writer on the dark side. But with some lighter and less malign moments.

First, the calm.

But I knew from the moment I keyed the ignition, it was bound to change ... □

John Carpenter: "I enjoy the fact – in *The Hungry Moon* – that there's something down in that pit ... I wanna see it, I love it, I love that idea that there's something down there. It's not something that assaults me and makes me turn away from the 'screen' and run out and feel bad. It makes me feel good when I read it. I see it as a movie."

Clive Barker: "We should make a film of *The Hungry Moon*?"

John Carpenter: "Yes, I think so."

(in *Horror Cafe* dialogue, BBC2, 15 September 1990)

I N C U N A B U L A P R E S S



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The symbol INCUNABULA was chosen for our company for its *shape* — cocoon, egg-like, gourd-like — the shape of Chaos according to Chuang Tzu. Cradle: beginnings. Sleep: dreams. Silken white sheets of birth and death; books, white pages, the cemetery of ideas.

This catalogue has been put together with a purpose: to alert YOU to a vast cover-up, a conspiracy so deep that no other researcher has yet become aware of it (outside certain Intelligence circles, needless to say!) — and so dangerous that the "winding-sheet" imagery in our title seems quite appropriate; we know of *at least* two murders so far in connection with this material.

Unlike other conspiracy theories, such as Hollow Earth, Men In Black, cattle mutilation, UFO, Reich & Tesla or what-have-you, the INCUNABULA Theory harmonizes with genuine frontier quantum mechanics and chaos mathematics, and does not depend on any quack nostrums, pseudoscience or ESP for proof. This will become clear to anyone who takes the trouble to read the background material we recommend and offer for sale.

Because of the unprecedented nature of the INCUNABULA File we have included short descriptions of some of the books, pamphlets, flyers, privately-circulated or unpublished manuscripts, ephemera & curiosa available through us. Some of this is highly inflammable and sexual in nature, so an age-statement must be included with each order.

Cash (or stamps) only. No cheques or money orders will be accepted.

Thank You,

Emory Cranston, Prop.

1. Wolf, Fred Alan. *Parallel Universes: The Search for Other Worlds* (New York, Simon & Schuster, 1988) cloth; 351 pp; \$25

Written by a scientist for non-scientists, simplistic and jokey, makes you feel a bit talked-down-to. Nevertheless Wolf uses his imagination (or other scientists' imaginations) so well he seems to hit accidentally on certain truths — (unless he knows more than he reveals!). For example: the parallel universes must have all come into being simultaneously "at the beginning" in order for quantum uncertainty to exist, because there was no *observer* present at the Big Bang, thus no way for the Wave Function to collapse and produce one universe out of all the bubbles of possibility (p.174). If an electron can disappear in one universe and appear in another (as suggested by the Everett/Wheeler material), a process called "quantum tunnelling", then perhaps *information* can undergo a similar tunnelling effect. Wolf suggests (p.176) that this might account for certain "psychic phenomena, altered states of awareness", even ghosts and spirits! Actual travel between worlds must of course involve tunnelling by both electrons AND information — any scientist would have predicted as much — but the mention of "altered states" of consciousness is *extremely revealing*! Elsewhere (p.204), Wolf speculates that a future "highly developed...electronic form of biofeedback" will allow us to observe quantum effects in the electrons of our own bodies, making the enhanced consciousness and the body itself a "time machine" (which is what he calls a device for travel between universes). He comes so close to the truth — then shies away! For instance (p.199), he points out that the Wave Function has a value BETWEEN zero and one until it collapses. If the wave function does not collapse, the "thing" it describes exists in two universes simultaneously. How strange of him not to mention that *fractal geometry* also deals with values between zero and one! As we know, the secret of travel between worlds is rooted in the marriage of quantum and chaos, particularly in the elusive mathematics of *fractal tesseracts* (visualize a 4-dimensional Mandelbröt Set — one of the simplest of the trans-dimensional "maps" or "catastrophic topologies"). Wolf appears so unaware of this, we must sadly conclude that he's *not* part of the conspiracy.

Particularly interesting — and not found in any of our other material — are Wolf's speculations about schizophrenia. Are schizophrenics receiving information from *other worlds*? Could a schizoid observer actually observe (in the famous double-slit experiment) a wave becoming two particles and then one particle? Or could such an observation be made by an extremely blank and simple-minded watcher (a sort of Zen simpleton perhaps)? If so, the perfect subject for parallel-worlds experiments would be a paradoxically complex simpleton: a "magnetized schizophrenic" who would be aware of the split into two worlds which occurs when a quantum measurement is made. Oddly enough, such a mental state sounds very close to the "positive schizophrenia" of certain extreme psychedelic experiences as well as the meditation-visualization exercises of actual travellers between worlds.

Despite its flaws, an essential source.

2. Herbert, Nick. *Quantum Reality* (NAL, 1986) cloth, \$40

A masterful and lucid exposition of the different versions of reality logically describable from the various interpretations of quantum mechanics. The Everett/Wheeler Theory is here given the clearest explanation possible in lay person's terms, given the author's unawareness (at the time) of experimental verification.

3. *ibid.* *Faster Than Light: Superluminal Loopholes in Physics* (NAL, 1988) cloth, \$30

Some theorists who touch on the Many-Worlds "hypothesis" place too much emphasis on time distortions and the implication of "time travel". These of course seem present in the theorems, but *in practice* have turned out (so far) to be of little consequence. Chaos Theory places much more emphasis on temporal directionality than most quantum theory (with such exceptions as R. Feynman and his "arrow of time"), and offers strong evidence for the past-present-future evolution that we actually experience. As K. Sohrawardi puts it, "the universe is in a state of Being, true, but that state is not static in the way suggested by the concept of 'reversability' in Classical physics. The 'generosity' of Being, so to speak, is *becoming*, and the result is not reversability but *multiplicity*, the unmeasurable resonant chaos-like fecundity of creation." Nevertheless, Herbert's second book is a brilliant speculative work — and it led him directly to a certain circle of scientists and body of research concerned with dimensional travel, rather than "time" travel, with the result that his third book (see next item) finally struck paydirt.

4. "Jabir ibn Hayyan" (Nick Herbert). *Alternate Dimensions* (publication suppressed by Harper & Row, 1989); bound uncorrected galleys, 179 pp., \$100. (We have five sets of proofs for sale, after which only xerox copies will be available at \$125.)

While working on *Faster Than Light* Herbert came into contact with one of the "travel cults" operating somewhere in California, perhaps one with a sufiistic slant ("Jabir ibn Hayyan" was a famous 10th century sufi alchemist); according to the preface of *Alternate Dimensions*, which is irritatingly vague and suggestive, this group seems to have trained him and sent him on at least one trip to America². Herbert suggests that he already had so much experience of altered states of consciousness and ability to visualize complex space/time geometries that only a minimum of "initiatic" training proved necessary.

In any case, despite its vagueness and brevity, this book is the most accurate and thoroughly-informed work on travel between worlds in our entire collection. So far we have been unable to obtain any *deep* theoretical work, and only a few papers dealing with practical aspects — but Herbert provides a magnificent overview of the entire field. Written for the lay person, with his usual clear and succinct approach to theory, Herbert's is the first "popular" study to make all the basic links: the Everett/Wheeler hypothesis, Bell's Theorem, the E/R Bridge, fractal geometry and chaos math, cybernetically-enhanced biofeedback, psychotropic and shamanic techniques, crystallography, morphogenetic field theory, catastrophe topology, etc.

Of course he's strongest in discussing the quantum aspects of travel, less sure when dealing with math outside his field, and most inspiring when describing (pp.98-101) visualization techniques and "embodied ecstasy" (ex-stasis, "standing outside" the body; hence *embodied ecstasy* paradoxically describes the transdimensional experience).

Herbert makes no claim to understand the travelling itself, and goes so far as to suggest that even the (unnamed) pioneers who made the first breakthrough may not have completely understood the process, any more than the inventor of the steam engine understood Classical physics (p.23). This definitely ties in with what we know about the persons in question.

Unfortunately the six illustrations promised in the table of contents are not included with the galleys — one of them was a "Schematic for a Trans-dimensional Express" which might be worth killing for! — and the publishers claim that Herbert never supplied the illustrations. They refuse to say why they suspended publication of *Alternate Dimensions* and in fact at first denied ever having handled such a title! Moreover Herbert has apparently dropped out of sight; if he hasn't met with foul play, he may have returned permanently to Earth2.

We regret having to sell copies of a flawed book for such an outrageous price; we'd like to publish a massmarket edition affordable by all — but if Harper & Row ever find out what we're doing, we'll need that money for court costs and lawyers' fees! So get it while you can — this is THE indispensable background work for understanding the Conspiracy.

5. Thomsen, Dietrick E. "A Knowing Universe Seeking to be Known" (xerox offprint from *Science News*, Vol. 123, 1983); \$5

Unwittingly demonstrates the resonance between quantum reality theory and the sufism of (for example) "the Greatest Shaykh" Ibn 'Arabi, who discusses in his *Bezels of Wisdom* a saying attributed to God by Mohammad (but not in the Koran): "I was a hidden treasure and I wanted (lit. 'loved') to be known; so I created the universe, that I might be known."

5a. We also have a few offprints (at the same price) of Thomsen's witty "Quanta at Large: 101 Things To Do with Schrödinger's Cat" (op.cit., 129, 1986).

6. DeWitt, Bryce S., & Neill Graham. *The Many-Worlds Interpretation of Quantum Mechanics* (Princeton, NJ, 1973); cloth, \$50

The standard (and far from "easy"!) work on the Everett/Wheeler hypothesis — a bible for the early pioneers.

7. Cramer, John G. "Alternate Universes II" (*Analog*, Nov. 1984)

A popularization of the Theory by a prominent physicist — no knowledge of the Conspiracy is detectable. We're selling copies of the SciFi mag itself for \$10 each.

8. Greenberger, D.M., ed. *New Techniques & Ideas in Quantum Measurement Theory* (Vol. 480 *Annals of the NY Academy of Sciences*, 1986); cloth, \$50

Contains the valuable if somewhat whimsical article by D.Z. Albers, "How To Take A Photograph of Another Everett World". Also the very important "Macroscopic Quantum Tunnelling at Finite Temperatures" by P. Hanggi (we suspect him of being a Conspiracy member).

9. (Anonymous). *Course Catalogue for 1978-79, Institute of Chaos Studies and Imaginal Yoga* (no address); xerox of mimeographed flyer, 7pp, \$15

An in-house document from the Institute where the First Breakthrough was attained (probably in the late winter or early spring of 1979) — therefore, although it makes no overt mention of Travel or the Egg, the *Catalogue* is of prime importance for an understanding of the intellectual and historical background of the Event.

According to an unreliable source (see *ESCAPE FROM EARTH PRIME!*, #15 in this list), the Institute was located somewhere in Dutchess County, New York, where the founder and director, Dr Kamadev Sohrawardi, was employed by IBM in the 1960s, "dropped out" and began his investigations into "consciousness physics"; it is also claimed that

Sohrawardi was a Bengali of mixed English, Hindu and Moslem origin, descended from an old sufi family, and initiated into Tantra. All this disagrees with clues in other sources and is perhaps not to be trusted. Other groups take credit for Breakthrough, and Sohrawardi may have been a fraud — but we're convinced that the *Catalogue* is authentic and Sohrawardi's claim the most certain.

At first glance, the *Catalogue* appears an example of late-hippy/early-New-Age pretentiousness. Thus there are courses in "Visions of Color & Light in Sufi Meditation", "Inner Alchemy in Late Taoism", "Metaphysics of the Ismaili 'Assassins'", "Imaginal Yoga & the Psychotopology of the Imagination" (the course-description mentions Henry Corbin, G. Bachelard and Shingon Buddhism), "Fortean Science & UFOlogy", "Hermetic & Neo-Pagan Studies" (apparently based on Golden Dawn teachings), "Visualization Techniques in Javanese Sorcery", "Stairways to Heaven: Shamanic Trance & the Mapping of Consciousness", "Stirner, Nietzsche & Stone Age Economy — an Examination of Non-authoritarian Hunter/Gatherer Societies", and — interestingly enough! — "Conspiracy Theory".

The "shamanic" course may have been a blind for research in psychotropic drugs, including such exotica as ahuasca (yagé, harmaline), ibogaine, yohimbine, Telepathine and Vitamin K, as well as the more standard psychedelics of the late 70s.

However, the *Catalogue* also contains amazing courses in frontier science, any combination of which could have provided the key or final puzzle-bit to the Breakthrough; apparently Sohrawardi taught or supervised most of them. Thus "The Universe in a Grain of Sand" promised information on models of brain activity, cybernetically-enhanced feedback, Sheldrake's morphogenetic field theory, René Thom's Catastrophic Theory as applied to consciousness, lucid-dreaming research, John Lilly's work on "altered states" and other mind-related topics. Then in "Strange Attractors & the Mathematics of Chaos", Sohrawardi discussed matters unknown outside the margins of academia till the mid-80s, and made the astounding prediction that Chaos in the macroscopic world somehow be found to mirror Uncertainty in the microscopic or Quantum World, a truth still unrecognized in "official" scientific circles today. He felt that n -dimensional strange attractors could be used to model the quantum behavior of particles waves, and that the "so-called collapse of the wave function" could actually be mapped with certain bizarre ramifications of Thom's catastrophic topology. Making references to work by Ilya Prigogine which was still being circulated in private "preprint" or samizdat form at that time, Sohrawardi suggests that "creative chaos" (as opposed to "deterministic" or entropic chaos) provides the link that will unify Relativity, Quantum, Complexity and consciousness itself into a new science.

Finally, in his "Advanced Seminar on Many Worlds", he states baldly that the alternate universes predicted by Relativity (Black Hole Theory) are the same as the many worlds predicted by Quantum, *are the same as* the fractal dimensions revealed in Chaos! This one-page course description is the closest thing we have to an *explanation* of why travel to other worlds *actually works*. Hence the *Catalogue* is an indispensable document for the serious student of the Conspiracy.

10. Beckenstein, J. "Black Holes & Entropy", (xerox offprint from *Physical Review*, Vol. D7, 1973; 28 pp), \$15

An early (pre-Breakthrough) speculation with suggestive hints about quantum and chaos-as-entropy — although no knowledge of actual Chaos Theory is demonstrated. This paper was referred to in an in-house memo from the Inst. for Chaos Studies & Imaginal Yoga, believed to have been composed by K. Sohrawardi himself (see #9).

11. Sohrawardi, Dr Kamadev. "Phlogiston & the Quantum Aether", (offprint from *The J. of Paranormal Physics*, Vol. XXII, Bombay, 1966), \$40

An early paper by Sohrawardi, flooded with wild speculations about quantum and oriental spirituality, probably dating from the period when he was still working for IBM, but making visits to Millbrook, nearby in Dutchess Co., and participating in the rituals of the League for Spiritual Discovery under Dr T. Leary, and the psychedelic yoga of Bill Haines' Sri Ram Ashram, which shared Leary's headquarters on a local millionaire's estate. The basic insight concerns the identity of Everett/Wheeler's "many worlds" and the "other worlds" of sufism, tantrik Hinduism and Vajrayana Buddhism. At the time, Sohrawardi apparently believed he could "prove" this by reviving the long-dead theories of phlogiston and aether in the light of quantum discoveries! (Phlogiston Theory — based on the thinking of the sufi alchemist Jabir ibn Hayyan — the *original* Jabir — was propounded seriously in the 18th century to unify heat and light as "one thing"). Totally useless as science, this metaphor nevertheless inspired Sohrawardi's later and genuinely important work on alternate realities.

12. *Ibid.* "Zero Work & Psychic Paleolithism", *East Village Other*, Vol. IV #4 (Dec. 1968); xerox reprint, single sheet 11½ × 17, from the legendary underground newspaper. \$5

Unfortunately no scientific speculations, but a fascinating glimpse into the *political* background of the inventor of Travel (or rather, one of the inventors). Making reference to French Situationist and Dutch "Provo" ideas which had helped spark the "Events" and upheavals of Spring '68 all over Europe and America, Sohrawardi looks forward to a world

without "the alienating prison of WORK", restored to the "oneness with Nature of the Old Stone Age" and yet somehow based on "green technology and quantum weirdness."

Wild and woolly as it is, this text nevertheless poses a fascinating scientific question in the light of the author's later accomplishments — a question still unanswered. All the "First Breakthroughs" we know of with any degree of certainty (those in New York, California and Java — the actual sequence is unclear) without exception entered parallel worlds *without human inhabitants*, virtual forest-worlds. Most science fiction predicted other worlds almost like ours, populated by "us", with only a few slight differences, worlds "close" to ours. Instead — no people!

Why?

Two possible explanations: (1) We cannot enter worlds containing "copies" of ourselves without causing paradox and violating the consistency principle of the "megaverse" — hence only wild (or feral) worlds are open to Travel. (2) Other worlds exist, in a sense, only as probabilities; in order to "become fully real" they must be *observed*. In effect, the parallel universes are *observer-created*, as soon as a traveller "arrives" in one of them. Sohrawardi *wanted* a paleolithic world of endless forest, plentiful game and gathering, virgin, empty but slightly haunted — therefore, *that's what he got*. Either explanation raises problems in the light of what actually happened; perhaps there is a third, as yet *un suspected*.

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13. (Anonymous). *Ong's Hat: A Color Brochure of the Institute for Chaos Studies* (photocopy of version published in *Edge Detector*, Vol. 1 1988, a Cyberpunk "fanzine" from Canada. Also included: a photocopy of the original color brochure, with slightly variant text, both for \$25.)

This bizarre document, disguised as a brochure for a New Age health retreat, reveals some interesting information about the activities of Sohrawardi's group or a closely-associated group. A fairly accurate description of the Egg is provided, as well as a believable account of the first (or one of the first) Breakthroughs. However, everything else in the pamphlet is sheer disinformation. The New Jersey Pine Barrens were never a center of alternate-worlds research, and all the names given in the text are false. A non-existent address is included. Nevertheless, highly valuable for background.

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14. "Sven Saxon". *The Stone Age Survivalist* (Loompanics, UnLtd., Port Townsend, WA, 1985), Pb, \$20

"Imagine yourself suddenly plunked down buck-naked in the middle of a large dark forest with no resources except your mind," says the Preface. "What would you do?"

What indeed? and who could possibly care? — *except* a trans-dimensional Traveller! Loompanics specializes in books on disappearance and survival involving a good deal of escapist fantasy — but as we know, this situation is all too real for the Visitor to Other Worlds.

Part I: Flint-knapping, an excellent illustrated handbook of paleolithic tool-production; II, zero-tech hunting and trapping; III, Gathering (incl. a *materia medica*); IV, Shelter; V, Primitive warfare; VI, Man & Dog: trans-species symbiosis; VII, Cold-weather survival; VIII, Culture ("Sven" recommends memorizing a lot of songs, poems and stories — and ends by saying "Memorize this book — 'cause you can't take it with you." Where is "Mr Saxon" now, we wonder?).

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15. Balcombe, Harold S. *ESCAPE FROM EARTH PRIME!* (Foursquare Press, Denver, Colo., 1986), Pb, \$15

This — unfortunately! — is *the* book that blew the lid off the Conspiracy for the first time. We say "unfortunately" because *ESCAPE!*, to all appearances, is a piece of unmitigated paranoid pulp tripe. Written in breathless ungrammatical subFortean prose, unfootnoted and nakedly sensationalistic, the book sank without trace, ignored even by the kook-conspiracy fringe; we were able to buy out unsold stock from the vanity press which published it, just before they went out of business and stopped answering their mail.

Balcombe (whom we've been unable to trace and who may have "vanished"), is the author of one other book which we've seen — but are not offering for sale — called *Drug Lords from the Hollow Earth* (1984) in which he claims that the CIA obtained LSD and cocaine from Dero-flying-saucer-nazis from beneath Antarctica. So much for his credentials. How he got hold of even a bit of the authentic Other Worlds story is a miracle.

According to Balcombe, the first Breakthrough was due not solely to K. Sohrawardi — despite his importance as a theoretician — but also a "sinister webwork of cultists, anarchists, commies, fanatical hippies and renegade traitor scientists who made fortunes in the drug trade" (p.3). Balcombe promises to name names, and out of the welter of rant and slather, some hard facts about the pioneers actually emerge.

Funding (and some research) emanated in the 70s from a "chaos cabal" of early Silicon Valley hackers interested

in complex dynamical systems, randomness and chance, and — gambling! — as well as a shadowy group of “drug lords” (Balcombe’s favorite term of abuse) with connections to certain founders of the Discordian Illuminati. Money was channelled through a cult called the Moorish Orthodox Church, a loose-knit confederation of jazz musicians, oldtime hipsters, white “sufis” and black moslems, bikers and street dealers (see “A Heresologist’s Guide to Brooklyn”, #24 in this list) who came into contact with Sohrawardi in Millbrook in the mid-60s.

Sohrawardi was a naive idealist and somewhat careless about his associations. He received clandestine support from people who were in turn connected to certain Intelligence circles with an interest in psychedelic and fringe mind-science. According to Balcombe this was *not* the CIA (MK-ULTRA) but an unofficial offshoot of several groups with Masonic connections! The Conspiracy was penetrated almost from the start, but was actually *encouraged* in the hope of gleaning useful information about parallel worlds, or at least about the “mental conditioning techniques” developed as part of the basic research.

By the mid-70s, Sohrawardi and his various cohorts and connections (now loosely referred to as “the Garden of Forked Paths” or GFP) had become aware of the Intelligence circles (now loosely grouped as “Probability Control Force” or PCF) and had in turn planted double-agents, and gone further underground. In 1978 or 79 an actual device for trans-dimensional Travel, the “Egg” (also called the Cocoon or the Cucurbit, which means both *gourd* and *alchemical flask*) was developed in deepest secrecy, probably at Sohrawardi’s institute in Upstate New York, certainly *not* at a branch lab supposedly hidden away in the NJ Pine Barrens near the long-vanished village of Ong’s Hat (see #13 in this list), since no such lab ever existed, nor does it exist now, despite what some fools think.

The PCF were unable to obtain an Egg for several years and did not succeed in Breakthrough until (Balcombe believes) 1982. The California groups, however, began Egg-production and broke through (into “BigSur2”) in early 1980 (again, Balcombe’s chronology). (Balcombe clearly knows nothing of the situation in Java.)

It remains unclear whether the East Coast and West Coast groups both entered the *same* alternate world, or two *different* but similar worlds. Communication between the two outposts has so far proved impossible because, as it happens, the Egg will not transport *non-sentient matter*. Travellers arrive Over There birth-naked in a Stone Age world — no airplanes, no radio, no clothes ... no fire and no tools! Only the Egg, like a diamond Fabergé easter gift designed by Dali, alone in the midst of “Nature naturing”. Balcombe includes a dim out-of-focus photo of an Egg, and claims that the machine is part computer but also partly-living crystal, like virus or DNA, and also partly “naked quantumstuff”.

Eggs are costly to produce, so the early pioneers had to return after each sortie and forego permanent settlement on E2 until a cheaper mode of transport could be discovered. However, emigration via the Egg proved possible when the “tantrik” or “double-yolk” effect was discovered: two people (*any* combination of age, gender, etc.) can Travel by Egg while *making love*, especially if one of the pair has already done the trip a few times and “knows the way” without elaborate visualization techniques and so forth. Balcombe has a field day with this juicy information and spends an entire chapter (VIII) detailing the “perversions” in use for this purpose. Talent for Travel ranges from brilliant to zero — probably no more than 15% of humanity can make it, although the less-talented and even children can be “translated” by the tantrik technique — and extensive training methods have somewhat improved the odds. California2 now contains about 1000 emigrants scattered along the coast, and the eastern settlements add up to 500 or 600. A few children have been born “over there” — some can Travel, some can’t, although the talented percentage seems greater than among the general population of Earth-prime. And being “stuck” on E2 is no grave punishment in any case!, unless you object to the Garden of Eden and the “original leisure society” of the Paleolithic flintknappers.

Balcombe claims that the PCF was severely disappointed by the sentience “law” of Travel, since they had hoped to use the parallel worlds as a weapons-delivery system! Nevertheless they continued to experiment, hoping for a more “mechanistic” technique; meanwhile they devote their efforts to (a) suppressing all information leaks, (b) plotting against the independent GFP and infiltrating the E2 settlements, (c) attempting to open new worlds where technology might be possible. They are however handicapped by a shortage of *talent*: the kind of person who can Travel is not usually the kind of person who sympathizes with the “patriotic discipline of the PCF” and rogue Masonic groups, but some of these end up defecting and “doubling”, and anyway most of them are much too *weird* for the taste of the rigidly reactionary inner core of PCF leadership, who wonder (as does Balcombe) whether these agents are “any better than the scum they’re spying on?”

More worlds have been discovered — E3 and E4 are mentioned in *ESCAPE!* (and we know that E5 was opened in 1988) — but all of these are “empty” forest worlds apparently almost identical with E2.

In summary, Balcombe’s style is execrable and his attitude repulsive, but his book remains the most accurate overview of the Conspiracy to date. If you’re only going to order one item from us, this is it.

16. (Anonymous). “Bionic Travel: An Orgonomic Theory of the Megaverse”, (xerox of unpubl. typescript headed “Top Secret — Eyes Only”; 27 pp), \$15

If this paper emanates from PCF sources, as we believe, it indicates the poor quality of original research carried out by the enemies of Sohrawardi and the GFP, and may explain the PCF’s relative lack of progress in the field (especially considering their much-larger budget!). The author attempts to revive W. Reich’s Orgone Theory, with “bions” as “life-force particles” and some sort of orgone accumulator (Reich’s “box”) as a possible substitute for the Egg. An unhealthy interest is shown in “harnessing the force of *Deadly Orgone*” as a weapon for use on other worlds. References

are also made to Aliester Crowley's "sex magick techniques" of the Ordo Templi Orientis — even speculations on *human sacrifice* as a possible source of "transdimensional energy". A morbid and crackpot document, devoid of all scientific value (in our opinion) but affording a fascinating insight into PCF mentality and method.

17. Corbin, Henry. *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn 'Arabi* (trans. by R. Mannheim; Princeton, NJ, 1969), cloth, \$50; Pb, \$20

One of the few books mentioned by title in the *Catalogue* of the Inst. of Chaos Studies & Imaginal Yoga (see #9 in this list). The "*mundus imaginalis*", also called the World of Archetypes or the "Isthmus" (Arabic, *barzakh*), lies in-between the World of the Divine and the material World of Creation. It actually consists of "many worlds", including two "emerald cities" called Jabulsa and Jabulqa (very intriguing considering the situation on Java2!). The great 14th-century Hispano-Moorish sufi Ibn 'Arabi developed a metaphysics of the "Creative Imagination" by which the adept could achieve spiritual progress via direct contemplation of the archetypes, including the domains of djinn, spirits and angels. Ibn 'Arabi also speaks of seven alternate Earths created by Allah, each with its own Mecca and Kaaba! Some parallel-universe theorists believe that Travel without any tech (even the Egg) may be possible, claiming that certain mystics have already accomplished it. If so, then Ibn 'Arabi must have been one of them.

18. Gleick, James. *CHAOS: Making a New Science* (Viking Penguin, NY, 1987), cloth, 254 pp, \$30

The first and still the most complete introduction to chaos — required reading — BUT with certain caveats. First: Gleick has *no* philosophical or poetic depth; he actually begins the book with a quote from John Updike! No mention of chaos mythology or oriental sources. No mention of certain non-American chaos scientists such as René Thom and Ilya Prigogine! Instead, alongside the admittedly useful info, one gets a subtle indoctrination in "deterministic chaos", by which we mean the tendency to look on chaos as a weapon to *fight* chaos, to "save" Classical physics — and learn to predict the Stock Market! (As opposed to what we call the "quantum chaos" of Sohrawardi and his allies, which looks on chaos as a creative and negentropic source, the cornucopia of evolution and awareness.) Warning: we suspect Gleick of being a PCF agent who has embedded his text with subtle disinformation meant to distract the chaos-science community from any interest in "other worlds".

19. Pak Hardjanto. "Apparent Collapse of the Wave Function as an *n*-Dimensional Catastrophe" (trans. by "N.N.S." in *Collected Papers of the SE Asian Soc. for Advanced Research*, Vol. XXIX, 1980), 47 pp, xerox of offprint, \$15

An early paper by the little-known scientific director of the Javanese "Travel Cult" which succeeded in breakthrough, possibly in the year this essay was published or shortly thereafter. Hardjanto is known to have been in touch with Sohrawardi since the 60s, no doubt they shared all information, but each kept the other secret from their respective organizations. The pioneers of Java2 became known to the GFP and PCF only around 1984 or 85.

This article, the only scientific work we possess by Hardjanto, shows him to be a theoretician equal or even superior to Sohrawardi himself — and if Hardjanto is also the anonymous author of the following item, as we believe, then he appears a formidable "metaphysicist" as well!

"Apparent Collapse", while certainly not a blueprint for Egg construction, nevertheless constitutes one of the few bits of "hard" science published openly on our Subject. Unfortunately, its theorems and diagrams are doubtless comprehensible only to a handful of experts. The topological drawings literally baffle the mind, especially one entitled "Hypercube Undergoing 'Collapse' Into 5-Space Vortex"!

20. (Unsigned, probably by Pak Hardjanto). *A Vision of Hurqulya* (trans. by K.K. Sardono; Incunabula Press, 1988), Pb, 46 pp, \$20

The Indonesian original of this text appeared as a pamphlet in Yogyakarta (E. Java) in 1982. We ourselves at Incunabula commissioned the translation and have published this hand-size edition, including all the illustrations from the original, at our own expense.

If one knew nothing about the Conspiracy or Many-Worlds Theory, *A Vision* would seem at first to be a mystical tract by an adherent of *kebatinan*, the heterodox sufi-influenced freeform esoteric/syncretistic complex of sects which is Java's unique contribution to world religion. *Kebatinan* includes an interesting non-authoritarian dimension, which has come to be influential in GFP circles, inasmuch as the idea of "spiritual master" (*guru, murshed*) has been replaced by "teacher" (*pamong*); some kebatinan sects utilize spontaneous non-hierarchical organizational structures.

However, in the light of our knowledge of the material existence of other worlds, *Vision* takes on a whole new dimension — as a literal description of what Hardjanto and his fellow pioneers found on Java2.

They discovered another uninhabited world — but with one huge difference. The author of *Vision* steps out of his “alchemical Egg” into a vast and ancient abandoned *City*! He calls it Hurqalya (after a traditional sufi name for the Other World or *alam-e mithal*). He senses his total aloneness — feels that the City’s builders have long since moved on *elsewhere* — and yet that they still somehow somewhere exist.

The author compares Hurqalya to the ancient ruined city of Borobudur in E. Java, but notices immediately that there are no statues or images — all the decoration is abstract and severe — but “neither Islamic nor Buddhist nor Hindu nor Christian nor any style I ever saw.” The “palaces” of Hurqalya are grand, cyclopean, almost monolithic — far from “heavy” in atmosphere, despite the black basalt from which they seem to have been carved. For the City is cut through by *water* ... it is in fact a water-city in the style of the Royal Enclave of Yogyakarta (now so sadly derelict) — but incomparably *bigger*. Canals, aqueducts, rivers and channels crisscross and meander through the City; flowing originally from quiescent volcanic mountains looming green in the West, water flows down through the City which is built on a steep slope gradually curving into a basin and down to the placid Eastern Sea, where a hundred channels flow dark and clear into the green salt ocean.

Despite the air of ruin — huge trees have grown through buildings, splitting them open — mosses, ferns and orchids coat the crumbling walls with viridescence, hosting parrots, lizards, butterflies — despite this desolation, most of the waterworks still flow: canal-locks broken open centuries ago allow cascades, leaks, spills and waterfalls in unexpected places, so that the City is wrapped in a tapestry of water-sounds and songbird voices. Most amazingly, the water flows at different levels simultaneously, so that aqueducts cross over canals which in turn flow above sunken streams which drip into wells, underground cisterns and mysterious sewers in a bewildering complex of levels, pipes, conduits and irrigated garden terraces which resemble (to judge by the author’s sketches) a dreamscape of Escher or Piranesi. Viewed from above, the City would be mapped as an arabesque 3-D spiderweb (with waterbridges aboveground, streams at ground level and also underground) fanning out to fill the area of the basin, thence into the harbor with its huge cracked basalt-block docks.

The slope on which the City is built is irregularly terraced in ancient SE Asian style — as many staircases as streets thread their way up and down, laid out seemingly at random, following land-contours rather than grid-logic, adding to the architectural complexity of the layer of waterways with a maze of vine-encrusted overpasses, arched bridges, spiralling ramps, crooked alleyways, cracked hidden steps debouching on broad esplanades, avenues, parks gone to seed, pavilions, balconies, apartments, jungle-choked palazzos, echoing gloomy “temples” whose divinities, if any, seem to have left no forwarding address ... all empty, all utterly abandoned. And nowhere is there any *human* debris — no broken tools, bones or midden heaps, no evidence of actual habitation — as if the ancient builders of the City picked up and took *everything* with them when they departed — “perhaps to one of the other Seven Worlds of the *alam-e mithal*” — in other words, to a “higher” dimension.

Thus ends the *Vision of Hurqalya* — raising more questions than it answers! There is no doubt that it describes exactly what was discovered in Java2 in 1980 or 81. But if the “observer-created” theory of other-worlds Travel is true, “Hurqalya” represents the “imaginal imprint” of what Hardjanto (or whoever) *expected* to find. Yet again, if that theory is false ... *who built Hurqalya*? One current explanation (arising from time-distortion theorems which have so far remained unsolvable) suggests that the Builders “moved” in prehistoric times to Earth-prime and became the distant ancestors of the Javanese (“Java Man”). Another guess: the Builders have indeed moved on to a “distant” alternate universe, and eventually *we may find them*.

A small settlement now exists in Hurqalya. Once the American groups heard of the City’s existence, members of both the GFP and PFC were able to visualize it and Travel to it *from America* (the Javanese can do the same from Java-prime to America2). Since 1985 all three groups have expanded most of their exploratory effort on “opening up” new worlds in the Java series. Apparently Indonesian sorcerers and trance adepts are *very* good at this, and we believe they have reached Java7 — without, however, finding replications of the City or any trace of the Builders — only more empty forest.

21. Von Bitter Rucker, Dr R. “The Cat Was Alive, But Looked Scared As Hell”: Some Unexpected Properties of Cellular Automata in the Light of the Everett-Wheeler Hypothesis” (*Complex Dynamical Systems Newsletter* no. 8, 1989), offprint, \$10

Who is this man and what does he know? No other serious mathematician has so far made any connection between cellular automata and the Many Worlds. Tongue-in-cheek (?), the author suggests that Schrödinger’s poor cat might be *both* alive *and* dead, even after the box is opened, IF parallel universes are “stacked” in some arcane manner which he claims to be able to demonstrate with a piece of software he has hacked and is selling for an outrageous sum; we have also seen an ad for this program in a magazine called *MONDO 2000*, published in Berkeley and devoted to “reality hacking”. We’d love to know what certain members of the Conspiracy would make of this bizarre concept!

22. Kennedy, Alison. “Psychotropic Drugs in ‘Shared-World’ & Lucid Dreaming Experiments” (*Psychedelic Monographs & Essays*, Vol. XIV, no. 2, 1981), offprint, \$5

This writer appears to have inside information. The notion of a drug-induced hallucination so powerful it can be shared by many (in a proper “blind” experiment) and can actually *come into existence*, into material reality; the idea that

drug-enhanced lucid dreaming can be used to discover objective information from "other ontological levels of being"; and finally the "prediction" that "a combination of these methods utilizing computer-aided biofeedback monitoring devices" will actually make it possible to "visit 'other' worlds in 'inner' space" (which suggests that the author adheres to the "observer-created" theory of parallel universes) — all this leads us to believe that the author is probably a member of one of the California Travel Cults — as well as an expert *bruja*!

23. (Anonymous). *A Collection of Cult Pamphlets, Flyers, Ephemera & Curiosa from the Library of a Traveller* (Looseleaf portfolio of photocopied originals) sold by lot, \$25

The unknown compiler of this *Collection* (whom for convenience we'll call "X") left it behind when he "vanished", whence it came into our possession. We know something of the compiler's career from an untitled document written by him and found with the *Collection*, which we call *The Poetic Journal of a Traveller* (#24 in this list), as well as a pamphlet believed to be by the same author, *Folklore of the Other Worlds* (#25). (The *Ong's Hat Color Brochure* was also discovered in the same cache, and is sold by us as #13.)

The *Collection* contains the following items:

1) *A History & Catechism of the Moorish Orthodox Church*, which traces the origins of the sect to early (1913) American Black Islam, the "Wandering Bishops", the Beats of the 50s and the psychedelic churches movement of the 60s — deliberately vague about the 70s and 80s however.

2) *The World Congress of Free Religions*, a brochure-manifesto arguing for a "fourth way", a non-authoritarian spiritual movement in opposition to mainstream, fundamentalist and New Age religion. The WCFR is said to include various sects of Discordians, SubGeniuses, Coptic Orthodox People of the Herb, gay ("faery") neo-pagans, Magical Judaism, the Egyptian Church of New Zealand, Kaos Kabal of London, Libertarian Congregationalists, etc. — and the Moorish Orthodox Church. Several of these sects are implicated in the Conspiracy, but no overt mention of the Travel Cults is made here.

3) *Spiritual Materialism*, by "the New Catholic Church of the Pantarchy, Hochkapel von SS Max und Marx", a truly weird flyer dedicated to "Saints" Max Stirner and Karl Marx, representing a group claiming foundation by the 19th century individualist Stephen Pearl Andrews, but more likely begun in the 1980s as a Travel Cult. Uses Nietzsche to contend that material reality itself constitutes a (or the) spiritual value and the principle of Infinity "which is expressed in the existence of *many worlds*." It argues for a utopia based on "individualism, telepathic socialism, free love, high tech, Stone Age wilderness and quantum weirdness"! No address is given, needless to say.

4) *The Sacred Jihad of Our Lady of Chaos*, this otherwise untraceable group calls for "resistance to all attempts to control probability." It quotes Foucault and Baudrillard on the subject of "disappearance", then suggests that "to vanish without having to kill yourself may be the ultimate revolutionary act ... The monolith of Consensus Reality is riddled with quantum-chaos cracks ... Viral attack on all fronts. Victory to Chaos in every world!"

5) *The Temple of Antinous*, a Travel Cult of pedophile boy-lovers and neo-pagans devoted to Eros and Ganymede. (Warning: this leaflet contains some just-barely-legal graphic material.) "Wistfully we wonder if the boygod can manifest only in some other world than this dreary puritanical polluted bochocracy — then, gleefully, we suddenly recall: *there ARE other worlds!*"

6) A Collage, presumably made by X himself, consisting of a "mandala" constructed from cut-outs of Strange Attractors and various Catastrophic topologies interwoven with photos of young girls and boys clipped from Italian fashion magazines. Eroticizing the mathematical imagery no doubt helps one to remember and visualize it while operating the Egg.

24. (Anonymous). *Poetic Journal of a Traveller; or, A Heresologist's Guide to Brooklyn* (Incunabula Press, pamphlet, \$15. Believed to be by "X", the compiler of the *Collection*, & transcribed by us from manuscript.)

Apparently X began this MS with the intention of detailing his experiences with a Travel Cult and eventual "translation" to the various alternate-world settlements, but unfortunately abandoned the project early on, possibly due to PCF interference.

It begins with a summary account of X's spiritual quest, largely among the stranger sects of his native Brooklyn: Santeria in Coney Island, Cabala in Williamsburg, sufis on Atlantic Avenue, etc. He is disappointed or turned away (and even mugged on one occasion). He becomes friendly with a Cuban woman of mixed Spanish, black, amerindian and Chinese ancestry who runs a botanica (magical supplies and herbs). When he asks her about "other worlds", she is evasive but promises to introduce him to someone who knows more about such matters.

She orders her grand-daughter, a 14-year-old named Teofila, to escort X through the "rough neighborhoods" to the old man's shop. The girl is wearing a t-shirt that says "Hyperborean Skateboarding Association", and indeed travels by skateboard, "gliding on ahead of me like Hermes the Psychopomp." X is clearly attracted to Teofila and becomes embarrassedly tongue-tied and awkward.

The old man, called “the Shaykh”, who claims to be Sudanese but speaks “pure Alabaman”, runs a junk shop and wears a battered old Shriners fez. His attitude toward X is severe at first, but X is enchanted by his rather disjointed rambling and ranting — which reveal a surprisingly wide if erratic reading in Persian poetry, the Bible, Meister Eckhardt, William Blake, Yoruba mythology and quantum mechanics. Leaving the girl in the shop, the old man takes X into his back office, “crowded with wildly eclectic junk, naive paintings, cheap orientalismo, HooDoo candles, jars of flower petals, and an ornate potbellied stove, stoked up to cherryred, suffusing waves of drowsy warmth.”

The Shaykh intimidates X into sharing a big pipe of hashish mixed with amber and mescaline, then launches into a stream-of-consciousness attack on “Babylon, the Imperium, the Con, the Big Lie that there’s nowhere to go and nothing to buy except their fifth-rate imitations of life, their bullshit pie-in-the-sky religions, cold cults, cold cuts of self-mutilation I call ‘em, and woe to Jerusalem!”

X, now “stoned to the gills”, falls under the Shaykh’s spell and bursts into tears. At once the old man unbends, serves X a cup of tea “sweetblack as Jamaica rum and scented with cardamon”, and begins to drop broad hints about “a way out, not to some gnostic-never-land with the body *gone* like a fart in a sandstorm, no brother, for the Unseen World is not just of the spirit but also the flesh — Jabulsa and Jabulqa, Hyperborea, Hurqalya — they’re as *real* as Brooklyn but a *damn* sight prettier!”

Late afternoon; X must return home before dark, and prepares to take leave of the Shaykh — who gives him a few pamphlets and invites him to return. To X’s surprise, Teofila is still waiting outside the shop, and offers to escort him to the subway. The girl is now in a friendlier mood and X less nervous. They strike up a conversation, X asking about Hyperborea and Teofila answering, “Yeah, I know where it is — I’ve *been* there.”

The main narrative ends here, but we have added some other poetic fragments included with the original MS, despite the fact that they might offend some readers, in light of the importance of the “tantrik technique” of other-world Travel. (And let us remind you that a statement of age must be included with every order from Incunabula Inc.). These rather pornographic fragments suggest that X, too shy to attempt anything himself, was in fact seduced by Teofila, and that his subsequent “training” for Egg-navigation consisted of numerous “practice sessions for double-yolking” with a very enthusiastic young tutor.

We believe that X subsequently made an extended visit to America2 and Java2, that he returned to Earth-prime on some intelligence or sabotage mission for the GFP, that he composed a paper on *Folklore of the Other Worlds* (see #25), that he and Teofila somehow came to the attention of PCF agents in New York, aborted their mission and returned to Java2, where they presumably now reside.

25. (Anonymous). *Folklore of the Other Worlds* (Incunabula Press, pamphlet, \$15. By the same author as #24, transcribed by us from manuscript.)

Our anonymous Traveller from Brooklyn appears to have composed this little treatise after his first extended stay in E2. It deals with tales of Travellers and inhabitants of the other-world settlements, pioneers’ experiences and the like. Of great interest is the claim that ESP and other paranormal abilities increase in the parallel universes, that the effect is magnified by passing through the series of discovered “levels”, and that a small band of psychic researchers has therefore settled on Java7, the present frontier world. The “temple” of Hurqalya (or whatever these vast buildings may have been) are used for sessions of meditation, martial arts and psychic experimentation. X claims that telepathy is now accepted as fact “over there,” with strong evidence for telekinesis and perhaps even Egg-less Travel.

Also intriguing are various accounts of “spirits” seen or sensed around the settlements, were-animals supposedly glimpsed on higher levels, and legends which have arisen concerning the lost Builders of Hurqalya. Something of a cult has grown up around these hypothetical creatures who (it is said) are “moving toward us even as we move toward them, through the dimensions, through Time — perhaps *backwards* through Time”!

X points out that this legend strikes an eerie resonance with “complex conjugate wave theory” in quantum mechanics, which hypothesizes that the “present” (the megaverse “now”) is the result of the meeting of two infinite quantum probability waves, one moving from past to future, the other moving *from future to past* — that space/time is an interference effect of these two waves — and that the many worlds are bubbles on this shoreline!

26. Eliade, Mircea. *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy* (Univ. of Chicago Press), Pb, \$30

This “bible” of the modern neo-shamanic movement also served as a metaphorical scripture for the pioneers of interdimensional consciousness physics and alternate-world explorers. Not only does it contain innumerable practical hints for the Traveller, as well as a spiritual ambience conducive to the proper state of mind for Travel — it is also believed that Eliade’s mythic material on the prototypal Stone Age shamans who could *physically* and *actually* visit other worlds, offers strong evidence for the possibility of Egg-less Travel — which however so far remains in the realm of “folklore”, speculation and rumor.

27. Lorde, John. *Maze of Treason* (Red Knight Books, Wildwood, NJ, 1988), Pb, 204 pp, \$10

You may remember that after the Patty Hearst kidnapping it was discovered that a cheap pornographic thriller, published *before* the event, seemed to foretell every detail of the story. Jungian synchronicity? Or did the Symbionese Liberation Army read that book and decide to act it out? It remains a mystery.

Maze of Treason is also a pornographic thriller, complete with tawdry 4-color cover, sloppy printing on acidulous pulp, and horrendous style. It's marketed as Science Fiction, however. And there is no mystery about the author's inside knowledge. "John Lorde" not only knows about the Conspiracy, he's obviously *been there*. This book is probably a *roman à clef*, as it appears to contain distorted portraits of Sohrawardi and Hardjanto (depicted as Fu-Manchu-type villains) as well as several actual agents of both the GFP and PCF — and even a character apparently based on the real-life "X", author of several titles in our list (#s 24 & 25).

The hero, Jack Masters, is an agent of an unnamed spyforce of American patriots who jokingly call themselves the Quantum Police. Their mission is to regain control of the alternate worlds for "the forces of reason and order" and "make trouble for agents of chaos in every known universe." The Q-Cops' secret underground HDQ contains a number of Eggs granting access to hidden bases on the other worlds, including "the Other America" and "the Other Indonesia".

Jack Masters is investigating the activities of a Chaote named Ripley Taylor, a "child-molester and black magician" who runs a Travel Cult out of a comicbook store in a "racially-mixed neighborhood" of New York. The Cops hope to catch Taylor with his "juvenile delinquent girlfriend", blackmail him and turn him into a double agent.

The hero now becomes involved with Amanita, a beautiful woman performance artist from the Lower East Side who seems to know a lot about Taylor and the Travel Cult, but also seems quite attracted to the virile Jack Masters. At first he suspects her of duplicity, but soon decides he needs to "convert" her by making her "fall for me, and fall *hard*." Jack's problem is that his own "talent" will not suffice for solo Travelling, and in fact he has never managed to "get across" — since the Cops do not practice Tantrik techniques! He suspects her of being an "Other-Worlder" and hopes she can convey him thence via the "infamous 'double-yolk' method."

Meanwhile Taylor has laughed off the blackmail attempt, burned down the comic shop and escaped "into the fourth dimension — or maybe the fifth." Masters heats up his affair with the artist Amanita, and finally convinces her to "translate" him — after three chapters of uninterrupted porno depicting the pair in many little-known ritual practises, so to speak. (The author rises above his own mediocrity here, and attains something like "purple pulp", an inspired gush of horny prose, especially in the oral-genital area.) Masters now rises to the occasion for yet a fourth chapter in which a "government-issue Egg" becomes the setting for a "yab-yum ceremony of searing obscenity."

Immediately upon arrival in "Si Fan" (the author's name for Hurqalya), Amanita betrays our hero and turns him over naked to one of the tribes of "chaos-shamans who inhabit these Lemurian ruins". At this point *Maze* begins to add to our knowledge of the real-life situation by depicting more-or-less accurately the state of affairs and mode of life in present-day Hurqalya — at least, as seen through the eyes of a paranoid right-wing spy.

The thousand or so inhabitants have made few changes in Hurqalya, preferring a life of "primitive sloth" and minimal meddling with Nature. Sex, hallucinogenic mushrooms and song-improvisation contests comprise the night-life, with days devoted to the serious business of "sorcery, skinnydipping, flintknapping and maybe a couple hours of desultory fishing or berrypicking." There is no social order. "People with bones in their noses sitting around arguing about Black Hole Theory or recipes for marsupial stew — lazy smoke from a few clan campfires rising through the hazy bluegold afternoon — children masturbating in trees — bees snouting into orchids — signal drum in the distance — Amanita singing an old song by the Inkspots I remember from my childhood ..."

Masters — or rather the author — claims to be disgusted by all this "anarchist punk hippy immorality — all this jungle love!" — but his ambivalence is revealed in his continued desire for Amanita, and the ease with which he falls into his own curmudgeonly version of *dolce far niente* in "Si Fan".

We won't give away the rest of the plot, not because it's so great, but because it's largely irrelevant (Taylor flees to distant dimensions, Masters gets Girl and returns to Earth-prime in triumph, etc., etc.) — the book's true value lies in these pictures of daily life in Hurqalya. Sadly, *Maze of Treason* is still our only source for such material.

The Conspiracy to deny the world all knowledge of the Many Worlds is maintained by *both* the forces active in the parallel universes — the GFP and PCF *both* have their reasons for secrecy, evasion, lies, disinformation, distortion and even violence. *Maze of Treason* is not our only source for claiming that people have lost their lives as a result of getting too deeply involved in all this. But we at INCUNABULA believe that truth will out, because it *must*. To stand in the way of it is more dangerous than letting it loose. Freedom of information is our only protection — we will tell all, despite all scorn or threat, and trust that our "going public" will protect us from the outrage of certain private interests — if not from the laughter of the ignorant!

Remember: parallel worlds exist. They have *already been reached*. A vast cover-up denies YOU all knowledge. Only INCUNABULA can enlighten you, because only INCUNABULA *dares*.

Thank You,

Emory Cranston, Prop.

A PINCH OF...

The screen blanked.

Kearney sat for a moment, blinking. His face, usually pale, was a cocktail of beetroot and purple and all the colours of fear, guilt, shock, confusion. Fully five seconds passed before he could pull himself together enough to speak.

"What do you want?"

The auditorium echoed. His question returned to mock him.

There were two other men seated in the chamber: one at the presentation console on the stage, and a second who occupied a place in the row behind Kearney. Neither of them answered. Baxter, the man on the platform, seemed to be trying to decide on a way to phrase his reply.

"Well?" Kearney surprised himself with the note of outraged demand in his voice.

"Calm down, Jeff," said Baxter. "It's not what you think."

"What are you talking about?" Kearney snorted. "That was blackmail material, and no two ways about it." He glared at the 1.5 metre telescreen that dominated the auditorium front wall.

"You're jumping to conclusions be-

fore you have the full story," said Baxter.

"So fill me in on the bits I'm missing, you bastard. I'm sure I'm not far wrong," Kearney sneered.

"A business proposition," said Baxter. "A unique and incredibly profitable business proposition."

"What are you talking about? The only profit involved here is the one you'll make if I pay up."

"No, no. Look Jeff, this isn't only extremely lucrative, it's also extremely illegal. Before we could risk approaching you we had to take precautions. We had to have some kind of deterrent in case you should feel inclined to turn us in." Baxter waved a hand at the screen. "That was just our way of letting you know that you can't afford to discuss this with anyone. Call it insurance if you like."

"That's not the word that springs to mind." Kearney's initial panic-honed anger began to diminish, displaced by a growing curiosity. A curiosity which was tempered by suspicion. "What's the scam?"

"Hold your horses," said Baxter. "Before I tell you anything at all I want to be sure that you understand just how incriminating that videotape is."

"You can save your breath, Ian. I'm bugged if I know how you managed to get it, but I'm well aware that I'd go down for fifteen years at least if I was convicted."

"Ah, yes. That Scottish surgeon – he got fifteen years did he?" Baxter shook his head in mock sadness. "And from what I read in the papers he was nowhere near as prolific an offender as you. No, indeed! In your case I'd think twenty to life would be nearer the mark."

"I expect you've got copies of the falsified records as well," said Kearney.

"Of the disks, yes. With the paperwork it's us who have the originals – the ones in the hospital files are the copies." Again he shook his head. "The public not only deplores the sort of thing you've been up to, it fears it – and people will never feel safe until they are sure that all those like you are locked up."

"Taking organs from the dead without authorisation – for profit. Even removing healthy organs from *living* patients to sell to people awaiting transplants. Kidneys, retinas, livers." Baxter couldn't conceal the admiration in his voice. "Bogus diagnoses to get signed releases giving you permission to remove the 'diseased' parts."

RICK CADGER

"All right. That's quite enough," snapped Kearney.

"But the best is still to come," Baxter protested. "Our little tribute wouldn't be complete if we left out the pinnacle of your achievement. You, with your unparalleled administrative talent and iron nerve, arranged the removal of a kidney from a prominent public figure, then sold him a transplant using an organ which by blessed coincidence became available at just the right time. *His own kidney!*"

Kearney winced.

"Really, Jeff, I take my hat off to you. The audacity, the skill; but *you* made it work. Don't you see?"

Kearney didn't see.

"We're not here to blackmail you. It's because of the things you've gotten away with that we want to recruit you. Your skills in the administrative field, your talent for deceit and bluff. God; you've got a perverted courage none of us could ever equal." He paused to let Kearney absorb his words.

Jeff Kearney's head span. The procession of emotions had been too rapid and too varied: shock, fear, rage, hope, relief, curiosity. Through the confusion he focussed on one aspect like a lifeline, and grabbed at it.

"What's the deal?" he asked again.

Baxter became serious. He seemed to examine the question as if searching it for booby traps.

"The production and supply of a commodity," he said. "Quality merchandise for a shockingly voracious market."

"Drugs," Kearney said.

"Not drugs." Baxter moved a hand over the controls on the presentation console and the videoscreen came to life again. "Let me give you an example. After all, they do say that a picture paints a thousand words, and all that," he said, and sat back to watch the show.

Kearney turned his eyes to the big screen. He didn't know what to expect. He couldn't even guess – his mind was still twitching from the adrenalin-charged ordeal of a few minutes before.

The opening sequence was of a man in a small, bare room; a cell of some kind. The man sat upon a basic wooden chair, and as the camera tilted downwards his left ankle was shown to be shackled to a

heavy staple in the concrete floor. Although he sat unmoving, the man's eyes were fixed on the camera, his gaze boring with terrified intensity into the lens.

Kearney looked at Baxter, then at the man behind him. Both of them had their eyes glued to the events in the video, and seemed to be mesmerised with an unhealthy anticipation. When Kearney turned back to the screen he became conscious of the soundtrack that accompanied the pictures. Someone out of shot was telling the shackled man that he was to be killed. The prisoner acted as if he believed that to be a completely reliable prediction of his fate – his eyes filled with tears, and he looked desperately around him in search of someone to whom he could appeal for mercy.

Kearney began to feel extremely uneasy, and it took only moments for the discomfort to shape itself into words.

"Oh, for Christ's sake." His voice was appalled. "Oh, Baxter, turn it off. I know what this is."

Baxter flicked a grinning glance at him, but otherwise showed no sign of having heard him.

Human nature being what it is, and Kearney being as human as anyone, his gaze drifted reluctantly back to the screen.

A second man came into shot. He wore a mask and carried a sawn-off shotgun. The disembodied voice of doom again told the distraught victim (quite unnecessarily, Kearney thought as he eyed the gun) what was in store for him, and a few moments later the first shot rang out. The prisoner lurched out of his chair and the camera zoomed in briefly on the ruin that had been his left foot.

Kearney winced, but did not avert his eyes.

The gunman reached down and yanked the injured man back up into his seat. The second shot took one hand off at the wrist, but somehow the man stayed in his chair, screaming in agony. The proceedings were delayed for a few seconds while the gunman reloaded his double-barrel weapon; then a third shot destroyed one of his victim's knees, and a fourth the other knee.

Again the armed man reloaded, while someone else threw water over the dreadfully wounded man – now nearly unconscious. The fifth shot blew a ragged red hole in the target's groin. The sixth

was the killing shot – but not a merciful *coup de grace*. The gunman stepped up to the wreck that had been his victim and held the two short barrels to the side of his throat. The blast destroyed the man's trachea, and he thrashed his last remaining moments away in a futile attempt to breathe.

The gunman turned to the camera and bowed theatrically. Then, when he'd gone, a closeup of the corpse occupied full screen until fade-out.

For a short time after the video ended there was silence; then Baxter turned to Kearney and said:

"Quality merchandise, Jeff."

"I don't believe it. You can't be serious."

"Why not? The market is insatiable. Within two or three years we'd all be set up for life."

"And if you're caught you'll be *locked* up for life, you sick bastard."

Baxter smiled. "That's what we need you for," he said. "Don't pretend you've never seen a snuff before. Since the deregulation of the satellite television stations they've been shown on dozens of channels. De-reg and the International Human Rights Court ruling on censorship have left a massive loophole – a grey area that makes handling, trading, and broadcasting these films technically legal in most countries. The only point that the supply can be lawfully interrupted is at the actual filming. After all, murder is still against the law." He roared with laughter.

"The television companies, especially in Europe, pay unbelievable sums for prime examples – and ours are the best there is."

Kearney looked at the other man in disbelief. "You really can't be serious. Baxter, you're a *doctor*. How the hell did you ever get involved in this disgusting crap?"

"I must confess I was rather dubious to begin with, but Mr Fruin here –" he pointed to the man behind Kearney – "was very persuasive. He is the one who devised the set-up we operate. He is also the man with the contacts when it comes to selling our product."

"What do you need me for, if Fruin is such a whizz?"



"The scale of our business is expanding," Fruin spoke for the first time. "My administrative skills are small-time. Marketing is my real speciality; whereas your previous escapade has convinced us that you have precisely the qualities we need to run the data camouflage side."

"Data camouflage?"

"The same sort of thing you did with the organ-dealing scam."

Kearney looked sharply at the blank screen, then back around to Fruin. Realisation forced his mouth open.

"That's right." Baxter spoke beside him. He'd left the dais and climbed the terraces of seats. "The stars of our productions are patients in this hospital."

There was a period of silence; then Baxter and Fruin stared at each other in bewilderment as Kearney started to laugh. He laughed and laughed until tears ran down his cheeks and his breath came in exhausted gasps.

"And you said *my* scheme was daring," he spluttered at last, and then disintegrated into laughter again. It was a ludicrous proposition, Kearney thought, but his laughter was largely a reaction to the series of shocks he'd experienced. Eventually he composed himself to some extent, and produced a handkerchief which he used to dry his streaming eyes.

"I'm sorry," he said. "I'm all right now, really."

Baxter shrugged. "Everything we've told you is true, Jeff. We need you to enable our project to realise its full potential. Within three years we could all retire extremely rich men."

"But you're asking me to become an accessory to murder – is that the term? I couldn't possibly."

"Why not? Don't give me any ethical shit – you're a hospital administrator, not a doctor – you took no sacred oath."

"Perhaps not, but I still have a conscience."

"Oh?" sneered Baxter. "One which is accommodating enough to let you arrange the butchering of sick people for profit, just so long as they don't die."

Kearney reddened.

"Look, Jeff." Baxter's tone was conciliatory. "These people are worthless. The down-and-outs, tramps and winos who get dragged in here already half dead through meths poisoning, hypothermia,

malnutrition. As often as not they've been half murdered by some other vagrant. They are barely human, Jeff. No one misses them – that's how we get away with it. They vanish, and no one notices."

"The only loose ends," said Fruin, leaning close to Kearney's ear, "are things like admission forms and so forth. We can't have patients without the paperwork to go with them – that wouldn't do at all. Details like that would be your only link to the operation; and the rewards for your expertise would be truly spectacular."

"You *will* be part of this, Jeff," said Baxter. "I know you. You're not the sort to let a golden opportunity pass by unexploited."

"You don't know me as well as you think, Ian," said Kearney with conviction. "What I did at Ryedene General was a stupid mistake. If your research was as thorough as it appears to have been, you'll know that I washed my hands of the whole thing months ago. I can't believe I ever got myself mixed up in it to begin with."

"And if the others get caught? You can bet they'll turn you in too."

"I doubt it. The surgeon, Whitten, had a stroke a couple of weeks back. His transplant days are over. The only way he'll see the inside of an operating theatre again will be as a customer. No, Whitten was the real mastermind behind it, not me."

Baxter shook his head. "Don't be so modest. Whitten may have come up with the idea – and I know he did all the actual carving – but you were the brain behind setting it up and organising everything."

Kearney got to his feet. "Forget it, Ian. I'm not interested. You needn't worry about me shooting my mouth off – we've known each other too long for that, and besides, you've got your 'insurance'." He pointed to the screen. "But as far as joining you is concerned ..." He shook his head. "Forget it."

"You will be a part of this," repeated Baxter as Kearney started up the steps toward the rear door of the auditorium, and this time his voice held anger.

Just as Kearney reached the door, Fruin came up behind him and grabbed his arm. Kearney shook the other man off roughly, and as he did so he felt a sharp pain in his arm. A moment later he was

through the door and in the deserted corridor beyond.

At first it was just a slight unsteadiness and a hazing of his vision, but in a few seconds Kearney was stumbling about the corridor like a drunk. His cognitive powers still functioned well enough for him to realise he'd been drugged, and he turned. At the end of the corridor, just outside the double doors that led into the auditorium, Baxter and Fruin stood smiling at him. When he squinted he could just make out what it was Fruin held in his hand – a hypodermic syringe.

When Kearney awoke the first thing that struck him – even before he opened his eyes – was how cold he was. When he did open his eyes they were seared by the bare harshness of a hundred-watt bulb which hung from the ceiling above him. The second feature of the world he woke into was pain. A spinning whirlpool of pain which had its centre somewhere in his abdomen. Kearney tried to sit up, but he learned with a shock that his arms and legs were secured to the surface he lay on by tough nylon straps.

"I would recommend that you remain as still as possible," said Baxter's voice from a point outside Kearney's point of view.

Kearney soon discovered that the advice was very nearly redundant, as the unyielding bonds which anchored his limbs allowed next to no movement. He tried to speak, but his dry mouth and throat could manage no more than a few incoherent croaks. He was alarmed by a sudden jolt and a metallic clinking sound. Kearney turned his head and saw a man leaning down at the side of him, fiddling with something out of sight. At the same time his bed (?) began to tilt slowly until he was held in a nearly vertical position, and as his attitude approached the perpendicular, Kearney found his lingering disorientation evaporated and the surroundings became clear. It was with gut-wrenching shock that he recognised the bare room he occupied – the death-cell from the video he'd seen in the auditorium.

In the open doorway stood Baxter, and movement behind him betrayed the presence of others.

"Welcome back to the land of the living," Baxter smiled. "For a while any-

way." He waved a dismissive hand, and the man who had cranked Kearney's bed upright slipped past him and out of the cell door.

"It really is a shame you couldn't bring yourself to take the job we offered you," said Baxter. "Oh, I wouldn't bother trying to speak; the drugs will make that quite impossible for some time. How's the pain? Not too bad I hope."

Kearney had all but forgotten the pain. Confusion and the appearance of Baxter had, for a while, distracted him so the discomfort in his abdomen faded into the background. Now, with Baxter's words as a cue, the pain made a dramatic comeback and Kearney groaned.

"Not so good, eh?" said Baxter. "Never mind, it won't be for long," and with that he stepped aside.

Kearney's eyes bulged with instant understanding and horror. In the doorway, previously obscured by Baxter's bulk, stood a tripod supporting a video camera.

No! he screamed in his mind. His mouth tried to form the word but he just drooled helplessly.

"You haven't seen the preparatory work we've done on you yet, have you?" Baxter asked cheerfully. He signalled to someone outside the cell, who handed him a large mirror. Baxter walked over until he stood in front of Kearney, and carefully angled the glass. "There. Can you see?"

Kearney could.

On his exposed belly was a livid red cross of long slashes – the source of the pain.

"Just deep enough to weaken the abdominal wall," said Baxter. "The skin and portions of the muscles beneath – the external oblique and the rectus abdominus. Sprayed plastic skin over the incisions to seal them."

Kearney just stared dumbly into the mirror.

"The post-mortem facilities of the morgue here are almost as extensive as those of the regular operating theatre," Baxter said, proudly. "Bit of an anachronism: modern surgical equipment in such an ancient shell, eh?" He indicated the old grey walls. "This little room is one of several that open into the morgue. Some are used for storage; one holds the hospital's emergency generator; and this one – well, this one is our studio."

And I am to be your star, thought Kearney vaguely.

They might have read his thoughts, for the crew of Baxter's production began to take their places. The cameraman started to ready his equipment, and a masked man entered the cell. Kearney's executioner.

"Yours is to be a small part," said Baxter to Kearney. "No lines to learn." He laughed. "It will be simple and relatively quick. A short item for one of our ever-popular compilation films." He turned seemingly to address the world in general. "If we're all quite ready then ..."

Kearney couldn't shake the strange feeling that he was watching a movie, rather than participating in the making of one. The crew and his slayer-to-be moved about in a reality somehow separate from Kearney's. He watched impassively as the last of them took their positions with lights, microphones and the like. Strangely he felt less concerned with the preparations for his termination than he did with the bone-penetrating cold that gripped him, and he was aware of his executioner's approach only on a shallow, superficial level.

At last all seemed to be ready, and like some tasteless caricature of a real movie-director, Baxter started the proceedings.

"Ready," he said. "And action!"

The tape in the camera began to roll, and the lens focused on Kearney. His co-star took his position and brandished a heavy piece of wood – once the handle of a sledge-hammer or pickaxe, Kearney guessed, absently. There was no time-consuming monologue from the assassin detailing the manner in which he intended to dispatch his victim; he just carefully checked to ensure that he didn't block the camera's view of Kearney, then swung the club in an oblique arc.

Kearney's eyes followed the weapon as it curved first away, then towards him. Still that strange detachment insulated him from the fear that should have consumed him, and in the instant before the club struck he wondered how much of this calm was due to the drugs, and how much to shock. But the impact broke the spell before he could reach a conclusion, and pain exploded.

The blow to Kearney's body split the flesh along the already weakened cross of scored skin, and under pressure from inside, his belly burst open spilling intestines and other organs over the floor.

The man on the screen lived for a short time after his abdomen had emptied its contents in a steaming heap of greys, purples and reds. His face, a mask of docility before the blow struck, contorted with absolute and infinite horror. An expression that displayed the unutterable panic inside him so graphically that the cameraman saw fit to forsake the gore for a second or two to zoom in on the incredibly distorted countenance.

Eventually life deserted the unfortunate man and his eyes rolled and filmed over. The screen faded and blanked.

"Well, Mr Sheng," said Baxter. "What do you think?"

Sheng, pale and sweating, mopped his face with a handkerchief. "Incredible," he managed to say after swallowing hard a couple of times.

"We like to think so," said Baxter. "Are you with us though, Mr Sheng? That is the question."

"Thousands of pounds you say," said Sheng, still pale.

"Hundreds of thousands, my dear fellow. *Hundreds* of thousands."

Sheng's eyes lit up with a greed that was more powerful than squeamishness. "I think I would like to join you, Mr Baxter," he said. "But ..."

"But?"

"Well, it's a pretty serious business – what if my nerve was to fail me and I decided I couldn't cope? I mean ... would there be trouble? Would you be difficult about it? If I had to resign I mean."

"Of course not. We have our little insurance package." Baxter patted a brown envelope. "We know we can rely on your discretion." He glanced involuntarily at the blank screen. "After all," he said. "Your predecessor left for just the reasons you mention; and there was no problem – no problem at all." □

Rick Cadger blames his state of mind on Theodore Sturgeon, Moorcock, Mervyn Peake, H.G. Wells, Alice Cooper, The Ramones, The Pogues and Iggy Pop. He has previously appeared in *Works*, and has more work coming up in *Auguries*, *Exuberance*, *The Scanner*, *Nightfall* and *Xenos*. He lives in Dunstable, Bedfordshire.

The Cruellest Month

Miles Hadfield

All Fool's Day

Foolstown lying there in the Dustbowl plain, and it is the only place for me to walk as I wander out of the desert mountains, my memory left hanging in rags from a tree on the horizon behind me.

A hot sun and getting hotter, burning on my wounds; I have a headwound and sores on my hands and feet ... Somehow it feels mythical, walking out of the desert like this, but I don't remember why.

I don't remember.

The Welcoming Party

The Mayor, the Hangman, the Lawman, the Beggar, the Junkie, the Juggler, the Poet, the Priest, the Madman, the Thinker, the Thief, the Witchdoctor, the Whore, all with faces painted to look like ire and fire and the end of the world ...

... and there they are, all lined up across the road that runs into Foolstown, underneath the Watchtowers. The Priest he chants and the Mayor frowns while the Thief unnoticed picks his pockets; then the Singer sings her song for me while the Orchestra in its pit plays of the joys of Spring. Odd, in this barren heat.

April 2 Foolstown Chants

Sunlight falls in dead through my window as I am awakened by the chanting. It is a hot, hot morning and the Priest is standing with the Brothers and Sisters in the square below my balcony, out of the shade; they are naked, save for a single chain of beads which links them all together – they are naked and burning in the sun, chanting like the insane, growing louder and louder.

Sleep calls me back, but there is no chance of sleep – and in any case I have slept enough; asleep on my feet as I entered Foolstown yesterday, so that the events of my arrival are a

blur. So I wash, wincing as the water runs over my wounds and burns; but the pain is dying – I remember now that the Witchdoctor tied herbs to my wrists, ankles and round my forehead. And now I dress, hurrying because I am desperate to leave my room and the chants, which are making my head ache.

It is a chant to keep death away, and it makes me feel cold; suddenly the wounds are throbbing again.

The Mayor

Sly eyes and a cruel face; strong hands that no-one can escape. Foolstown runs for this man – or so he seems to believe.

- You do realise, he says, arm snaking about my shoulders, that you have to earn your keep. We all have our role here in Foolstown.
- What do you want me to do?
- Find your role and help us keep the world turning. For now, learn.
- One question ... you were all waiting for me. You were all ready. How did you know I was coming?
- It is my business to know; that is my role. I shall be watching you.

His role – but to keep the world turning or himself in place?

Questions

Tall and black, thin as a spider, gaunt and old with a face of crumbling stone; the Thinker is walking towards me as I leave the Mayor's room.

- Ah! The new man! I have been looking for you, we must talk.
- Then please, let us get in the shade.
- Of course – forgive my haste ... but, you see, I have things to ask you.

- And I have questions for you.
- Well, ask first.
- How do you hope to keep the world turning?
- I do not ... But these fools all find their own ways. The Priest has his Brothers and Sisters and the Brothers and Sisters have their Priest and his chants ... the Junkie has her needle, the Singer her songs. Others count, others watch, all delude themselves that they have a place. Some pretend they have laws to uphold; but I am afraid there are no natural laws anymore; not since God died.
- God is dead?
- Of course ... they found his corpse – don't you remember?
- I remember nothing.
- Nothing? That is unfortunate; I like to have facts, you know. And facts may save you; I must warn you that your arrival here has aroused certain suspicions ... there are some rather paranoid people in Foolstown.
- I remember nothing. But – there are shadows.
- Then there is no point in me questioning you. Later, maybe; speak to me should anything return – who you are, where you are from. Anything.

April 3 Healing

The Witchdoctor is a beautiful woman, her tanned, muscular body decorated with whirlpool tattoos, her eyes holding the wisdom of nature; she sees no need to keep the world turning.

- Let me see the wounds.
- They are slightly better, but there is still pain.
- Strange ... There shouldn't be – not now; but then, they are strange wounds ... You don't remember how you got them? ... No, they seem still fresh.
- I have washed them, like you said.
- Good, good. I have prepared this powder for you, add a little to the water whenever you bathe them.

She touches the wounds, and it is a healing touch.

April 4 Watchtower Bells

Clouds of dust sighted up on the horizon, the point where I first appeared and knew, and the Watchtower Bells are ringing like an accusation and there is crying and clamour with all eyes turned to me.

Who have I led to Foolstown?

Who sent me?

... the gallows have a long shadow in Foolstown.

April 5 Junk Prophecy

Poor wretch, thrashing and retching around in the dirt, vomiting and fouling herself, limbs jerking spasmodically,

sweat and dust on her deathwhite skin and she gasps. Poor Junkie.

And she shouts

— The dead shall walk! The waste shall grow! Summer shall come from the Spring rites!

over and over, and

— We shall chant on into darkness! The Watchtowers shall fall!

The Mayor, followed by the Lawman and two Enforcers (brick-built brutes with faces stupidly cruel) paces out into the square, muttering curses.

— The gibbering bitch. The filthy slut. Her nonsense will be the death of us all.

He looks on as the Enforcers kick the Junkie, drag her to her feet, and pull her away while she screams of being defiled by monsters and the sky turning black and the dead god that will rule again ...

And then there are only screams, muffled, from inside the prison. I shiver, staring at its black, forbidding walls; nobody in Foolstown will walk anywhere near it by choice. I fear it, and the eyes watching me.

April 6 Dustcloud Constructions

The Thinker, it turns out, is a friend, as he feels there is knowledge of some positive value locked in my memory. He wants to save me from those who see me as a bad omen or a spy. The question is, a spy for whom? For all I know, there is no world outside Foolstown; no-one will tell me of other communities or of the history of Foolstown, not even the Witchdoctor, who has become my lover.

But my enemies are becoming more hungry for blood as the cloud of dust comes nearer – it is now visible from the ground, whilst from the Watchtower sounds of construction can be heard; the clank of steel on steel, the hiss of engines. In a few days, say the Watchtowers, we shall be able to see what is going on.

Night and the Witchdoctor

She sits naked in the dark, crying.

— I fear for you, she says; the tattoos on her back twitch as she moves her weight from side to side, swaying like a pendulum. You should leave Foolstown.

— I cannot.

Where else is there? And the Thinker says he is sure he can unlock my memory; I must stay, I must know.

— I cannot save you from them, she says, turning. Tears shine in the moonlight.

— I'll find a way to save myself ... If only my memory would come back.

— I shall try to help you. She sighs. And look – your wounds are still bleeding.

She lights the lamp, which flickers over her body, and walks

over to the table; there is her preparation.

— I must bathe them for you.

And afterwards she is kissing me, and we make love; but our coming is empty, and I lie alone trying to grasp shadows that slip through my mind and cry as they elude me, and there is nothing but the night, growing hotter and hotter.

April 7 The Shadow of the Gallows

The Junkie screamed all the way to the gallows and now she wriggles like a desperate fish on the end of a line; I can hear her choke, hear her hands beat against her sides, see a dark stain spreading through her pants. Then the Singer sings the gallows song, the children gleefully taking up the chorus and laughing like sunlight. And then the Junkie is still and straight, pointing like a needle to the darkness heart of the world.

The Thinker taps my shoulder.

— So, who will be next, eh?

I frown, not understanding anything. Wearily he shakes his head.

— Foolstown always was a dangerous place to live, when there was any kind of crisis. And there are some who like to make crises out of nothing.

Away he walks, tipping his hat to the Mayor, the dust swishing about his feet. The prison sunlight burns down, harder than ever, but I hardly notice it, standing there watching the lifeless body of the Junkie.

April 8 Railroad

The word from the Watchtowers is that a massive railroad is under construction, from the horizon to here; already a train steams slowly along behind the building work. The plume of smoke from its funnel can be seen climbing straight into the sky, for there is no wind on this plain, just straight lines, still air and mountains heathazed into a dream.

And so the fear grows. Who are they? Everywhere I go in the town, I am followed by one of the Enforcers; whispers spring up wherever I walk.

April 9 Burial

The Witchdoctor has completed her autopsy on the Junkie; death by hanging, she concludes. The Mayor has ordered an inquiry into who was responsible.

— There is a murderer in our midst, he announces. We must root him out and crush him.

The Thinker sees my face, and takes me over to one side.

— Say nothing — a fool knows everything except when to stay silent.

I join the funeral procession at the Witchdoctor's side. The sun is fiercer every day, burning my skin; my wounds are in great pain and bleeding profusely — a dark bruise is

appearing down my right side. Blood drips onto the grave ground; my head spins in the sun.

And there is the grave like an open mouth; they throw in the Junkie like a morsel of food to keep it happy. Keep Death at bay ... No coffin for the Junkie, or anyone else in Foolstown.

As the children shovel earth into the grave, the Priest chants.

— Victims, sinners, the innocent, offenders and the holy: may the dead never return to Foolstown.

Amen.

I follow the Witchdoctor as she sprinkles herbs around the graveyard. Blood drips, slowly, as the Priest leads his Brothers and Sisters in a low chant that makes me feel cold and alone.

April 10 Out After Dark

The nights are getting ever hotter, and I can't stand lying in heat and sweat while my lover sleeps, or on evenings when she entertains herself in the brothel. Tonight as she lies in a faraway dream I have to take a walk.

High moon lighting the streets in silver; silky darkness; warmth; dust; all wrapped around Foolstown tonight.

The Orchestra pit is empty — they are all playing at the brothel, I can hear the music through its doors, briefly louder as the Mayor emerges, still fastening his trousers. He sees me and glares, his eyes flicking briefly to someone behind me. I do not have to look back to know.

I try to imagine what the Witchdoctor does in there. I like women too, she says, do you begrudge me that pleasure? I do not begrudge her any pleasure but I wish she was mine alone.

Tonight I need comfort and she is tired and distant; would she begrudge me this pleasure? I go into the brothel and buy myself two women for the night.

April 11 Questions

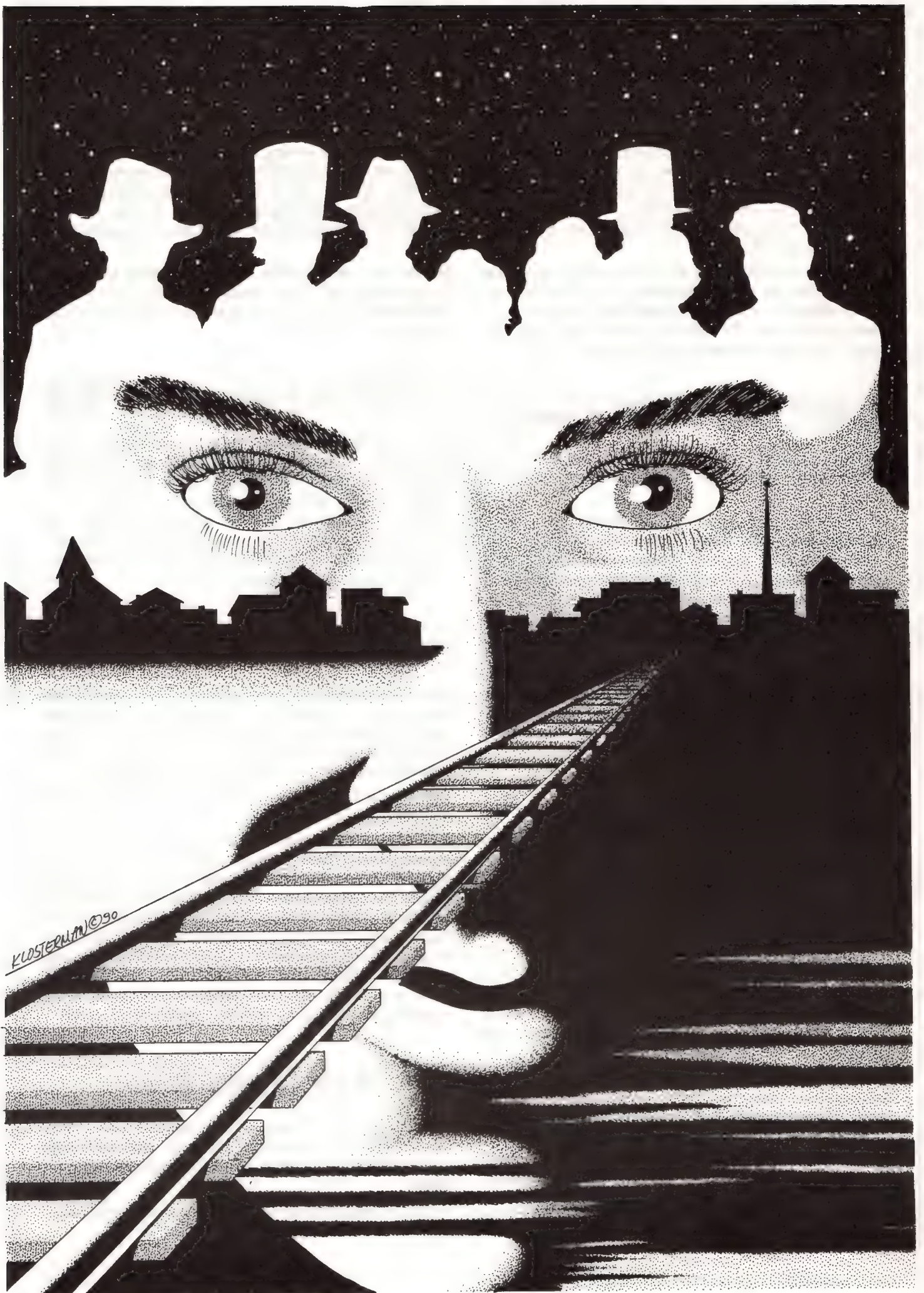
Dragged out of my hired bed by the Mayor's Enforcers; they beat me in the street and haul me into the jail, my face dragging in the dust. I've been breaking the curfew — what curfew? I am a spy. How can I be a spy? Who is there to spy for? They won't tell me anything, I can't think, only of the gallows, of the Junkie squirming in mid-air and an empty grave. An empty grave — I can see it, feel its cold earth embracing me, I can feel fear like a knot in my stomach, tightening.

But who am I where am I from how did I get here who sent me how did I get these wounds?

These wounds, they are bleeding more than ever and the bruise down my right side hurts more, and more still when they beat me and whip me and fill my head with nightmares and there are no more questions

and there are no answers

just a pain-filled darkness and no time, just forever, in this cell and I can feel myself dissolving ...



April 16 My Friend the Thinker

I do not believe that I have survived the jail – I was sure that I would be the Mayor's next scapegoat; and yet here I am. The Thinker, one of the more influential members of the community, secured my release, convinced as he is that there is something of use locked away in my memory. He risked his life for this, and his life – or at very least his standing in Foolstown – now depends on him getting the results he promised.

Has it really been five days since I last saw sunlight? The light is fiercer, the days hotter, now, and you can hear the sound of the railroad under construction from the ground, drawing ever closer. Everyone is afraid – there have been several hangings, and anyone could be next.

April 17 Ascent of the Watchtower

— Come up, see the construction for yourself, the Thinker said. It may trigger your memory, it may be familiar to you.

The Watchtower is a metal sphere placed on top of an immense steel pylon; inside it is filled with bizarre machinery, devices to see great distances and through walls and record sounds ... Through the large screens mounted on its walls can be seen the details of the construction. The train is immensely long and surrounded by a city of tents and shanties, covering much of the plain to the North. The Watchers estimate that there are five thousand people there, all to lay a railroad and build a city in its wake. And at the head of it all, huge machines laying the tracks, manned and guarded by huge, sun-blackened workmen and soldiers ... I stand watching for the best part of an hour, but there is nothing to revive my memory.

Out of Foolstown

In despair the Thinker takes me for a walk through the area of a mile or so outside the town boundaries.

— We must be careful, he mutters. There are devices in those towers that can record every word spoken in Foolstown. But not out here, not this far. We must invent some memories for you: say, perhaps, that you are a soldier escaped from a war. It could save us both.

And so we wander, inventing stories; I am a battle weary soldier, a hero, a genius ... the towers watch us but they do not hear.

This is wasteland, where the bones of the past are buried, all the metal and plastic debris of a world that is gone and barely remembered. So the Thinker explains; there are machines in the Watchtowers that remember, but nobody understands those machines. Perhaps there are answers locked in my mind, perhaps the walk will free my mind; but it only sets my feet to bleeding. When I arrive back, there is dirt in the cuts, which hurt more than ever; the Witchdoctor is frightened for my health when she sees them.

April 18 Fever Premonition

Fever hits me like a storm, carries me somewhere else where I see hideous, frightening things ... gasmask doctors and men with no faces leading me down stairs with no end to darker places, snakes sliding down moonbeams all to kill me. Birds dying in the air falling like rain turning to tears turning to glass shattering on the ground. Sunlight breaking against the darkness wall. My grave. Me in my grave, breathing.

But she tends me, the Witchdoctor, she tends me slowly, through the molten days that slide into one another and out of existence, through the days that pass while I dream I can feel gentle wind blowing.

April 25 The Flowering of the Dead

Fingers like spring shoots poking up through the graveyard soil, marked with my blood ... Voices buzz with the prophecy of a Junkie. By the end of the day arms stretch full from the ground like saplings, in pairs; there are mounds in between each pair where heads will push through. The Priest and his people shiver and shudder and chant in quaking voices, may the dead never return to Foolstown ...

— Your blood, says my lover, your blood.

Axle-trees

Metal bushes, rust-plants, iron flowers growing in the desert; angle trees of metal frames with nuts and wheels and nails and hinges hanging off like fruit. Barbed wire thickets, in a circle round Foolstown. Oildrum cacti bristling sharp steel pins; steel creepers, steel grass, flowering steel ...

Can it be a fever-dream, is Foolstown a fever-dream, a madness or a riot inside?

It all seems unreal; when I reach out and touch the Witchdoctor, it is as if she is not there – she is not substantial, not real to me anymore. But in any event, we are becoming more distant from one another – she spends more and more time at the whorehouse, telling me I am recovered from my fever. But I do not feel recovered; I wander bewildered, and people are talking in tongues; the winds are rising, blowing in dust and scraps of metal in clouds which have monster heads and laugh and leer at me. The Juggler sings and the Singer juggles and nothing seems to make any sense any more.

April 26 The Cruellest Month

At midnight last night, the heads of the dead were poking through the soil – I recognised the Junkie, smiling through a veil of earth. All whole, all physically restored, but dead inside.

By this morning they have all sprung from the earth, rooted by their feet, swaying naked in the wind.

— Summer comes! screams the Madman, cartwheeling around the town square.

The Thinker watches him, nodding.

— Summer comes, he repeats quietly, Summer comes, over and over.

The Priest crosses himself, chanting in some vile language which hurts me – it makes my wounds hurt; the bruise is now bleeding. I would go to the Witchdoctor for help, but she is avoiding me.

— Spring comes to an end. There are rites. Summer comes.

— Spring has been unkind. Summer will be evil, says the Mayor.

The sounds of construction are now unavoidable; the Watchtowers report that it is now on the outskirts of the junkyard forest, and is beginning to cut its way through. The thick metal barrier has bought us time, but my wounds are hurting and all eyes watch me. My blood, my blood ...

Waves

The rites will guarantee a Summer free of evil; we shall sing and sacrifice and celebrate the flesh, and the dead shall return to the earth. The Witchdoctor shall preside.

But now there is news, of a disaster.

The priest found her, in a bath of blood and water, wrists and ankles slashed to shreds; she still held the razor. There were tear marks on her face and bloodstains on her tattoos.

My lover ...

She could not face the rites; she would have had to kill her husband, a role I had played, and she could not do it. She killed herself instead. I look down at her ... Wind comes through the window, setting waves rippling in the blood and washing around her breasts.

I want her. I need her. As they move her body, blood drips from my forehead onto hers. Tonight I dream we are together somewhere.

April 27 The Dead Walk

Empty eyed, empty, they file into the town square, shambling, dead feet stirring dead dust; and they walk to the road leaving Foolstown, between the Watchtowers. The Enforcers move to stop them, but the Priest shakes his head.

— Let the dead never return to Foolstown.

The metal forest parts before them, and they leave a wide path in their wake – wide enough to build a railroad through. And so they all leave, all except the Witchdoctor, sitting empty on the edge of a mortuary slab.

I look her in the face and find nothing.

I look into myself and find nothing.

Where has my past gone?

April 28 Raising the Heat

They hung the Poet today; the Thinker says the Mayor always found him a danger. There have been many hangings – the crisis has allowed the Mayor and his cronies to impose a reign of terror.

Now the Thinker and I are in the Watchtower; the Mayor has sent us, partly in the hope that we may come upon some saving idea, but mainly to keep us out of the way. My life is more than ever in danger – I arrived, after all, on the first day of this month, the month where it all turned insane and brutal.

*"The violence of spring
has come of age
and shall flower
into the final heat
of summer's bloom"*

The poet's last work. He hung for it. And now I am the only one left to blame.

April 29 The Slaughter of the Dead

The Dead have met the railroad, we see. The construction workers have cut away a quarter of the thicket; the tracks are laid, and the monstrous black engine follows, funnel spitting steam and sparks. On its side is written *Old West Steam Corporation*. The locomotive is called *Lady of the South*.

The dead have walked to meet them, the thicket parting before them, rivet seeds flying, cogwheel flowers closing. In their wake they leave nothing, except for a lone clock tree, ticking a thousand different times away.

Their empty faces and bloodleaking eyes are met by terror in the first construction workers; but a siren rings and armed men rush forward, cutting into the mass of the dead. Ten generations of Foolstown history, dying again.

Unhampered now, the railroad will soon sweep into Foolstown. Perhaps there will be answers; or death, at the hands of the army which clusters in a swollen camp at the entrance to the barbed wire undergrowth.

April 30 Answers

My face is painted to look like death and I stand hand in hand with my dead lover. The Priest and his naked choir sing, even as the Singer swings from the gibbet; their body paint runs with sweat. The Thinker is hiding in the Watchtower. The Mayor and his Enforcers stand to the front, guarding the entrance to Foolstown.

But the advance party into the town have guns; the Lawman is killed, the Enforcers give way. And so the tracks are laid and by afternoon the train is moving into Foolstown. We stand down, waiting, even the Thinker, who has descended from the tower with a set of figures.

— Gibberish! he curses, slapping the papers against his hand. That thing just confounds our instruments!

He is interrupted as a tall, slim figure steps out onto the

footplate; he is dressed in a top hat and a flowing black suit. He smiles and tips his hat to us.

— Jairus Meister, upon your service, he says. Professional mountebank.

He leaps to the ground, ending with a flamboyant bow and a flourish of his swordstick.

— Who is the leader amongst you?

Proud, the Mayor steps forward; the two climb up into the front carriage.

Soon the Mayor is thrown out of the carriage by two strongmen; he lands face first in the dirt.

— Fool! I want the real leaders! snaps the Mountebank. The Whore! The Thinker! The Pariah!

With this last he points to me – can I be that?

Inside the carriage is luxury – gold and jewels and velvet and silk and crystal; perfect wine; priceless art.

— Of course you are the pariah. No memory. You walked in with trouble. You made the dead walk and the walking dead. You resurrected the bones of the past. Even your lover killed herself. Pariah!

The Thinker stands up.

— What are you going to do to Foolstown?

— I bring Summer. A smile, and, to me again, And your memory. Please don't lose it again.

Night fell.

Mayday

Blind men, eyes burnt out, going around the maypole, in chains, chained to the maypole, driven around it with burning whips. They walk on the bones of children while the Orchestra plays in a pit full of snakes, playing the Blood Symphony with sounds of laughter. Others line up and march and chant, staring blind into darkness, chanting to deaf ears. All in my honour.

I died a long, long time ago and now I am back, a dead man walking into the world on All Fool's Day, walking in off the horizon with my gift. Now I lie with my bride the Witchdoctor and we know true joy.

We ride on a train flying out of Foolstown, past the falling Watchtowers, leaving madmen to lead the blind, leaving the world to stop turning. As a mascot and charm, I have mounted the head of the Mountebank on a steel pole at the front of the locomotive.

I am going to find the corpse of God, resurrect Him, and with Him rule.

Sparks fly from the engine, like fireflies in the black Summer night. □

Miles Hadfield is a 21-year-old Green Oxford graduate who grooves to world music. Currently unemployed, he's had stories or poems accepted by *Works*, *Auguries* and *Exuberance*.



"... I read it with the usual mixture of fascination, admiration, irritation, and exasperation."

—Robert Silverberg

SCIENCE FICTION eye

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—Locus

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BBR REVIEW

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THE ORBIT SCIENCE FICTION YEARBOOK 3

edited by David S Garnett

Orbit, ISBN 0 7088 8337 0.
361pp, £4.99

This is the third in the Orbit SF Yearbook series, and though I cannot comment on how it compares to its predecessors, the back cover of this edition carries praise for both previous volumes from *Interzone*, *The Independent* and even A.C. Clarke esq.

The introduction, by Iain M. Banks, keeps up the barrage of praise, and so it was with great disappointment that I waded through the first story, "At The Rialto" by Connie Willis, and was left with a vague feeling of annoyance and the immortal words "So What!" echoing around my head. Don't get me wrong, I have nothing in particular against this story, but it managed to strike me as a sort of in-joke that I was unable to fully understand, and that annoyed me. It relates to a convention on quantum physics, takes a couple of good side-swipes at such events, but ends up very flat.

The second offering, J.R. Dunn's "The Gates of Babel", is a well-constructed and equally well-written 'Challenger' story, littered with abandoned gantries and platforms of rusting iron in a very predictable desert setting. It goes nowhere and didn't really manage to arouse my interest on the way, but it is well-written.

By this time I was getting pretty bored, so full marks to Bruce Sterling for the third offering – a tale of a faded rock journalist and a post-punk comic artist – "Dori Bangs".

BOOKS BOOKS BOOKS B

Questionable status

BEST NEW SF 4 edited by Gardner Dozois

Robinson, ISBN 1 85487 057 2. 598pp, £6.99

Gardner Dozois' long-running *Year's Best SF* anthology, retitled for UK consumption as *Best New SF*, contains a comprehensive appraisal of the year's activities, 25 short stories, and a list of 200 honourable mentions.

Sadly though, the fiction is generally lacklustre. It would be unfair to single out any particular stories, although Connie Willis' "At the Rialto" gives the impression that quantum theory is just another hip set of vocabulary to dazzle the reader with, just as Matthew Dickens alleged of cyberpunk in BBR #12. "At the Rialto" shows a perfect mastery of the idiom, with a clever and intricate storyline, but it ultimately goes nowhere.

However, I strongly recommend wading through the mediocre to find the real gems in the collection. With no further comment, I'll list them here for your further investigation and enjoyment: "For I Have Touched the Sky" (Mike Resnick), "Dori Bangs" (Bruce Sterling), "The Ends of the Earth" (Lucius Shepard), "A Deeper Sea" (Alexander Jablokov), "The Edge of the World" (Michael Swanwick), "Enter a Soldier. Later: Enter Another" (Robert Silverberg), and "Great Work of Time" (John Crowley).

All of these stories are challenging and stimulating to read, but for only seven out of the whole anthology to hit the mark in this way is worrying for an anthology of this supposed calibre.

Dozois' summation, neatly divided into film, novels, collections, big press and small press magazines, is a useful and informative reference of the year's activities in SF. In particular, his coverage of lesser-known publications shows a willingness to read around and investigate new material. It is particularly good to see contributions from *Strange Plasma* and *Pulphouse* in the anthology, with *Journal Wired*, *New Pathways* and *Interzone* well represented in the list of honorable mentions.

Even so, nine of the 25 stories reprinted here, together with a whopping 80 of those recommended, come from *Asimov's*, Gardner Dozois's day-job magazine. To put this in perspective, the next best represented are *The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction*: 4/25, 13/200; *Interzone*: 2/25, 11/200; *OMNI*: 1/25, 9/200; and *Pulphouse*: 1/25, 12/200. It gives the impression that despite his wide appreciation and knowledge of the field, this book is Gardner Dozois' choice for a 'Best of *Asimov's*', plus the best of what he would have liked to print in *Asimov's*, only someone else got to it first!

Certainly it means that this collection is poor value for money for anyone who already subscribes to *Asimov's* and *F&SF*, a factor more applicable to the first market of American readers than here in the UK, but none the less valid for that.

Although this volume serves as an excellent introduction for newcomers to SF, the bias of its content and the low hit rate of its stories makes me question its status as the definitive selection of the best SF from 1989. □

To say any more would ruin the story for those who are about to rush out and buy this book, but I loved this short story, its style and its wit.

Equally impressive is the next story, "Surrender" by Lucius Shepard. Mutants in the rain forest and a marvellous attack on military and economic imperialism of the Central American kind. This, I began to think, is what the short story is all about. "Chimera" by Jayge Carr, with more twists on genetics, this time set in a cleverly crafted future, was equally enjoyable.

I haven't the time or space to tell you that this anthology also contains a great short story by Orson Scott Card and a piece of the worst ego-masturbation I've come across in many a moon, but maybe I will. Robert Silverberg has a short in this collection entitled "The Asenion Solution", which apart from being easily the most

lightweight and worthless piece here, is further marred in the introduction by this comment about Isaac Asimov: "And we went back to being good friends and high admirers of each other's work and intelligence." Nurse, the sick bucket please!

Other stories worthy of a mention here must include James Morrow's tale of a time-travelling Abraham Lincoln, which is thoroughly enjoyable, and John Crowley's "In Blue", which is not.

Anyway, add to this strange and motley collection of stories Brian W. Aldiss' vaguely witty essay "Why Didn't The Crowd Boo?" and John Clute's excellent review of the best books of the year, and I think that you have an anthology that is well worth buying, not for its entirety but most certainly for its highlights. Go on – fork out a fiver!

Chris Whitmore □

Raw talent

THE HARDCORE #4

A4, 44pp, £1:80 (4/£6) from Scott Dorward, 1st Floor Flat, 212 Croydon Road, Beckenham, Kent BR5 4DE (4/£8 surface or 4/£10 air mail outside the UK)

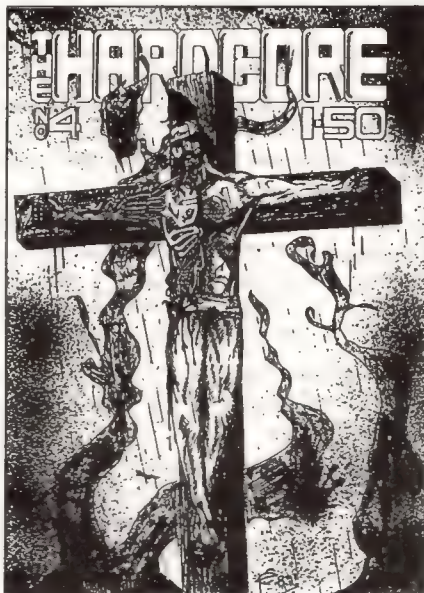
Subtitled 'Cyberpunk is Dead', this issue of *The Hardcore* not only dissects the corpse, but examines who's feeding from the flesh and who spawned the damn thing in the first place.

We're taken back to the early 80s and the Mirrorshades clique, to examine the people behind the movement and their formative works. We're shown the Stirling/Shiner broadsheet *Cheap Truth*, which did so much to polarise the cyberpunk v. humanist dispute, and where the battlecry of 'Radical Hard SF' was first coined. We're taken still further back, to examine the influence of Pynchon and Dick on the developing movement.

With the added benefit of hindsight, the influence (or not, as the case may be) of cyberpunk in comics and the cinema is put into perspective, and Sterling's *Islands in the Net* undergoes a lengthy examination. Finally, the potential input of the second wave of new writers is discussed, highlighting the ideas of people like Richard Kadrey, Glenn Grant, Mark Laidlaw and Paul Di Filippo.

With the intriguingly-named editor 'jael nuit' at the helm, the staff of *The Hardcore* are incisive and informed in their critique, enhanced through being distanced from their subject in a way that American magazines can never achieve. Saying that, perhaps the magazine should have concentrated exclusively on non-fiction, as the stories by Scott Dorward and D.F. Lewis, and the strip by Allan Harvey, seem out of place in this critical environment.

Not since first reading *Science Fiction Eye* have I had such a buzz from a critical magazine, and what's more it's homegrown. Granted, the production's a bit ragged in places, but that just adds to the urgency and raw talent these guys display. If they can keep up the pace, *The Hardcore* looks set to become the independent critical journal the UK so desperately needs for the 1990s. □



EXUBERANCE #1

A4, 60pp, £1:75 (4/£6:50) from Jason Smith, 34 Croft Close, Chipperfield, Herts WD4 9PA

I must admit to being a sucker for A4 size magazines, there's a completely different feel to them compared to digest-size publications. I was sorry that Ade Hodges' *New Visions* disappeared after only one issue, so it's heartening to see Jason Smith building up the market again with this new title.

Steven Widdowson has the honour of opening the inaugural issue with "The Activity of Mice", a story which links childhood discovery in the secret passages of an old country house, to a later self-discovery on the surface of Mars. It's evocative of Ballard and magic realism, and

sets a high standard of writing for the other contributors to follow.

Amongst the subsequent ten stories in the magazine, those by Miles Hadfield and A.M. Smith maintain the pace set by Widdowson, building to Dave W. Hughes' "Happy Birthday". This is a quietly disturbing picture of the weakness of human materialism, set in an increasingly familiar urban dystopia. By contrast, the more gruesome horror of Deborah Beard's cuckoo baby in "Surrogate" is developed with a clear sense of pace and tension that is guaranteed to put off any young couple contemplating starting a family.

In addition to a good spread of writers, Jason Smith has gathered a fine array of artists to illustrate this issue. Although only David Windett is familiar to me, the artwork

from Russell Morgan and Kenneth Gray is also of a consistently high standard. However, the undoubted star is Roger Morgan, whose striking use of contrast is bound to win him more widespread coverage before too long.

Though there's scope for development in the design of the magazine, and a number of annoying typos to iron out, Jason Smith makes good use of the format to create an attractive and readable magazine. It's still early days, but I think *Exuberance* will be one to keep your eye on. □

FLICKERS'n'FRAMES #10

A5, 36pp, plus a special C60 sampler of synthesizer music from the Electronical Dreams label, £1:25 (4/£4:50) from John Peters, 299 Southway Drive, Southway, Plymouth, Devon PL6 6QN

I've said before that *Flickers'n'Frames* refuses to stand still, and now it's the cause of the first ever music review in BBR!

Part of the package that John Peters is offering with issue #10 is a free 60-minute sampler from the Electronical Dreams cassette label. This Cornwall-based electronic music company has around a dozen titles in its catalogue so far, and most of them are featured on this tape.

Whilst the public image of synthesizer music is broadly Jean-Michel Jarre, Tangerine Dream and Vangelis, there exists a healthy independent industry just as there is in publishing, as the popularity of the recent UK Electronica festival in Sheffield aptly demonstrated. To those in the know, therefore, this compilation gathers together some of the leading British and American synth artists.

The selection on this tape comprises generally spacey and atmospheric pieces. I must admit to preferring more punchy and up-tempo synth work, but this is music to absorb and let wash over you. To have this on simply as background music is to lose the total effect. Nonetheless, Ben Kettlewell sets up some interesting rhythms in "Circles and Ritual", and Michael Neil shifts up a gear in "Shea Gwahir".

If you like quiet and melodic electronic music, then this sampler definitely merits your attention. Better still, send an SAE or 2 IRCs for the latest ED catalogue and newsletters to Electronical Dreams, % Clive Littlewood, Silvertown Villa, Higher Bugle, St Austell, Cornwall PL26 8PY.

In *Flickers'n'Frames* itself, there's clear evidence of rapid progression. No sooner has John Peters consolidated his A4 presentation than he drops it down to A5, reduces the type and packs even more into each issue.

Issue #10, the second at the smaller format, continues the earlier trends with fiction by Martin Brice and John Light, and Mike Ashley's regular electronic music column, which this time complements the ED cassette. As usual, the news and reviews of what's happening in the SF/fantasy/horror film and video markets are pertinent and up-to-date, though with *Flickers'n'Frames* being a quarterly there is obviously a certain amount of ageing if you come to it late.

Both the tape and the magazine are great value in their own right, and together make a package it would be foolish to pass by. □

NOY #1-3

A5, 20pp, #1-2 39p each, #3 44p from 1 Cleveland Street, Todmorden, West Yorkshire

For the unsuspecting, *Noy* is an anarchic collection of satirical and blatantly piss-taking comics in the spirit of *Viz*. Mr Drinkalot and his Magic Pint, The Southerners, Watsy Onnabout and The Squirts all vie for attention, but Derek and his Karmic Wig was the undoubted hit, and Mister Sumner is rapidly becoming a cult figure.

Alongside the piss-take though, are gloomier visions of the future more usually found in upmarket comics. Martin Chatfield's "The Siddy", Peter Miles' "Melancholia", the uncredited "Poison" and Gary Townsend's two-pager are oppressively drawn and darkly disconcerting.

Although some of the strips are little more than scribbles, a lot of the artwork is really excellent, as could be expected from stylists like Chatfield and Miles. There's a

strange combination of material in this comic, but it seems to hold together in its own peculiar way, making *Noy* definitely worth investigating. □

PEEPING TOM #1

A5, 40pp, £1:50 (4/£5:50) from David Bell, Yew Tree House, 15 Nottingham Road, Ashby de la Zouch, Leicestershire LE6 5DJ

Peeping Tom differs from most of the new magazines that have recently appeared in that, over and above the standard desire to promote quality material otherwise sadly neglected elsewhere, it presents a definite concept for its fiction to fit into.

We tag along with *Peeping Tom* without knowing what we might find. It might be fantasy or perhaps a peep at the future. More often than not it's something disturbing or macabre, but since Tom's a compulsive voyeur, we know we're going to take another look sooner or later.

The material selected for this first issue reflects the spread of taste well, varying from Brian Lumley's predatory supermarket in "Late Shopping" to the gruesome "Decor" of Conrad Williams and Michaela Edridge's futuristic petshop in "Animal". D.F. Lewis and Nik Morton are also here, as well as Anthony North and Steve Grover.

I must admit I didn't enjoy all of the stories, though the idea of Tom as our guide appeals to me. It draws the reader into the magazine, playing to our inquisitive nature and the darker, more illicit side of our character. It brings greater cohesion to the diverse elements of the magazine, and in turn forms a more substantial base from which to develop and expand. □



Detail from "Poison", *Noy* #3



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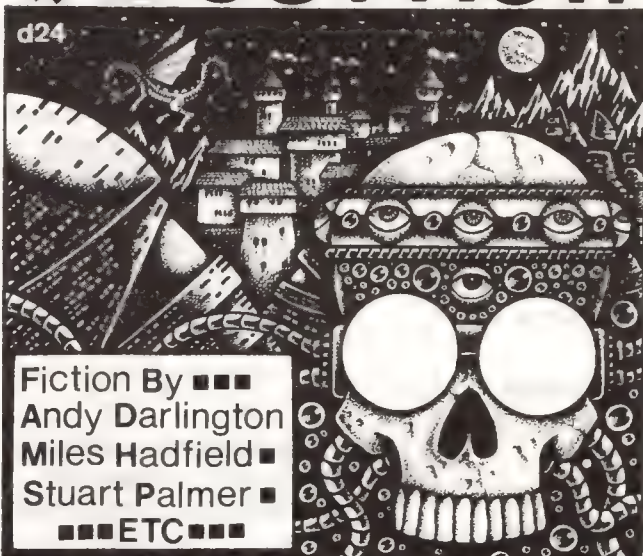
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STATESIDE STATE

QUANTUM #36-37

A4, #36 32pp, #37 36pp, \$3 each (4/\$9) from Trust Publications,
 8217 Langport Terrace, Gaithersburg, Maryland 20877, USA
 (£2.50 each or 4/£9 from the NSFA)

Published for the past 18 years under the title of *Thrust*, *Quantum* is a magazine with numerous Hugo nominations under its belt and an enviable track record.

In the first two issues under the new banner, the line-up is characteristically strong. Michael Bishop appraises Theodore Sturgeon's novel *More Than Human*, Gene Wolfe tackles the tricky task of pinning down the appeal of R.A. Lafferty, and Paul Di Filippo explores some parallels between Ballard's *The Drowned World* and *The Day of Creation*. Dave Langford offers an article on senseless violence in SF, and Nancy Etchemendy talks about her year's service on the SFWA Nebula Jury, whilst there are interviews with James Morrow and Michael G. Coney.

All of these features are detailed and informative but, with a few exceptions, they rarely rise above the descriptive. Di Filippo has obviously conducted extensive research in preparation for his article, but doesn't really go on to interpret his findings; both Wolfe and Bishop are too much in awe of their subjects to offer much objective insight or analysis.

The vague sense of unease caused by this shortfall was not helped by Ronald Anthony Cross's obsession with the need for SF to be scientifically valid if it's to be labelled as true SF. This is a disturbing and elitist attitude that makes a physics degree a prerequisite of being a true SF writer, and something I thought died out 25 years ago.

Most annoying of all was that unfortunate appearance of what most famous writers do worst – writing about themselves. Bishop's Sturgeon article almost falls into this trap, but Poul Anderson's regular "Beer Mutterings" column – how I get my ideas, people I've met in SF – are superficial self-indulgences. For Jack Williamson to write in comment of Bishop's article only to allege he had the same idea only several years earlier, and that Sturgeon must have acknowledged this in the naming of one of his characters, really had me reaching for the bucket.

Having said that, the interviews are interesting, the book reviews are candid, and the readers' comments generally provide the main discussion base of the magazine. Overall I must admit to being somewhat disappointed with what I found for a publication of *Quantum's* reputation, though it's probably ideal for fans with more conservative taste. To coin a Gardner Dozois phrase, perhaps it's simply not 'gonzo' enough for me, but I'd rather be reading *Science Fiction Eye* or *Nova Express*. □

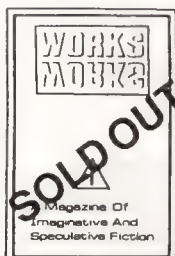
SCAVENGER'S NEWSLETTER

A5, 30pp, 12/\$18 from Janet Fox, 519 Ellinwood, Osage City
 KS 66523-1329, USA

This monthly small press magazine contains hundreds of editorial addresses, condensed writers' guidelines, writers' tips and gossip/info on who is buying what for whom and why. It comes with a hefty pack of flyers from magazines you might like to subscribe or contribute to, and all in all is a useful resource for the small press writer of fantasy, horror and SF. If you are such a writer and your budget is limited, don't bother with *Writers' and Artists' Yearbook*. You would be far better off subscribing to this magazine for (generally American) addresses and supplementing it with the (generally English) addresses sent regularly to members of the British Science Fiction Association. If you aren't a writer, read it to see the egotistical and apparently random demands editors make in their magazine guidelines!

Lyle Hopwood □

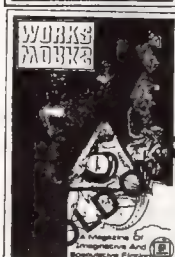
Why?



The print runs are constantly being increased, yet Works still ends up sold out. So, why change the mag? Well, if something can be improved, then improve it. After many a dark night and worried expressions, we can now offer you Issue #6 – tear down the scaffolding and stand back, for here comes the new Works.



You can have Issue #6 for the special introductory price of £1.25p. From issue #7 onwards, the price will be £1.60p. Anyone wanting to subscribe to Works, with issue #6, will have to pay £5.50p.



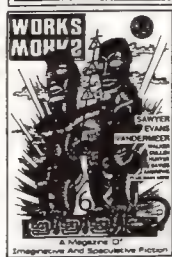
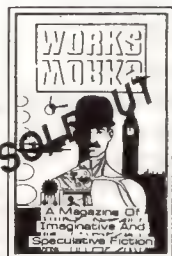
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SPACE & TIME #78

A5, 120pp, \$5 (2/\$9.50) from Gordon Linzner, 138 W. 70th St. (4B), New York, NY 10023-4432 (£2:50 or 4/£9 from the NSFA)

Space & Time has a reputation for a full package of solid and well-plotted stories. Recent issues have not quite hit the mark, but this latest edition is back to what the magazine does best, even though the overall feel is a bit too fantasy/mythology for my personal taste.

Chris Harold Stevenson's "Temperamental Circuits" is an amusing and frivolous examination of the effects of too much occult literature on a well-used photocopying machine, and Kristine Kathryn Rusch weaves magic with an alienated husband's attempts to impress his wife in "The Winter Giant".

In "Greatly Exaggerated", Gabriel Silva de Anda explores some of the legal

ramifications of human personalities maintained in computer circuits after death. Very many stories just offer the basic concept of human AI in some fancy fashion, with no actual plot line. It is therefore very pleasing to discover that Gabriel has gone on to wrap a very clever story around the initial precept, sparking some interesting ideas to pursue in the process. My only niggle is that the characters are somewhat two-dimensional, and the story rushes to a rather unconvincing 'happy-ever-after' ending.

The highlight of the magazine is James A. Lee's "Big Eyes", perhaps because I find its contemporary setting more appealing and believable. Set in Soviet-occupied Afganistan, battle-fatigued troops meet with native shamen and their protective deities with what proves to be an explosive outcome. Though the political message is thinly-veiled, "Big Eyes" works well because Lee pays attention to character interaction

and development, rather than using his people simply to motivate the plot.

However, the dominating presence in this issue is Richard L. Tierney's "The Pillars of Melkarth", which at 48 pages takes up nearly half the magazine. This is a fast-moving tale of ambition, fire elementals and ancient gods set in the Mediterranean sea-port of Tyre at the time of the Roman empire. A little self-conscious at times, both in its plotting and its attention to detail, "Melkarth" is nonetheless very enjoyable.

It's good that *Space & Time* is able to publish a story of this length, some 24,000 words in my estimation, without it overwhelming the rest of the publication or detracting from the other stories. Any other magazine would either demand a shorter version, or be forced to serialise it over a number of issues. It's a great pity that more markets like *Space & Time* do not exist to make these longer stories more widely available. □

Eclectically gonzo

NOVA EXPRESS Vol 3 #2

A4, 28pp, \$3 (4/\$10) from Nova Express, PO Box 27231, Austin, Texas 78755-2231 (£2:50 or 4/£9 from the NSFA)

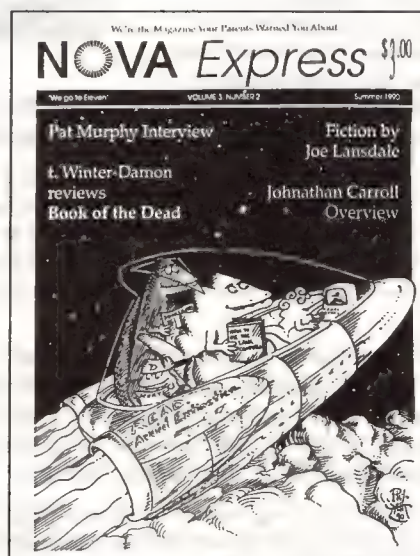
Nova Express was described by Gardner Dozois in *Best New SF 4* as an "robust and gonzo", though quite exactly what he means by 'gonzo' I'm not really sure (perhaps it's simply shorthand for "too weird for *Asimov's*").

Non-fiction, in the form of reviews, articles and interviews, forms the bulk of the magazine. Normally, the spotlight is on one particular writer or theme, with interviews, appraisals of their work, and an exhaustive bibliography of past, present and future publications. This time though, the issue is more varied. Jonathan Carroll receives an in-depth examination at the hands of Glen Cox, whilst Pat Murphy is interviewed at Armadillocon in 1988 and 1989, with no bibliography for either.

I'm not sure that the 'Then' and 'Now' approach really works with the Murphy interview, as there's a certain amount of repetition that might have been better pruned out, but it's interesting to hear about the influence of Murphy's work at the Exploratorium, a hands-on science museum in California where science, art and human perception merge in the teaching experience.

Glen Cox's article, meanwhile, presents an overview of Jonathan Carroll's work since 1980, highlighting his skill in portraying the absurdity and strangeness which we normally take for granted in everyday life. Cox is extremely perceptive in his understanding of Carroll's attention to detail, but his critical approach does not obscure his obvious enjoyment and appreciation of his subject matter.

Fiction this issue comes from Joe Lansdale, godfather of the bizarre hybrid of SF/fantasy/horror with the traditional Western story known as 'cowpunk'. "The Daiper or The Adventure of the Little Rounder" describes how a young toddler turns on the television, only to have an electric shock translate an alien being into his nappies. Chased by the daiper into his bedroom, the kid relates his predicament to scenes from old cowboy films on TV, and describes what happens using idiomatic curses



picked up from his Daddy.

To have the daiper forcibly enhancing the kid's intelligence by communicating with him in complex mathematical formulae is the coup de grace, the footnotes to the reader elevating the story to a completely new level. No review can really do justice to this off-beat and challenging story, which packs more into two pages than most fiction magazines manage in forty. If this is representative of cowpunk, then I'm off to buy *Razored Saddles* and *The New Frontier* to catch up on some reading.

Interperse all this with Dwight Brown's impassioned plea for better QC in the big publishers, one of the most eye-level reviews of BBR I've ever read (thanks guys!), and some truly inspired snipes at L. Ron's continued prolific output, and you've got an idea of the overall package of *Nova Express*. Call it 'gonzo' if you like, but this is one magazine that's going to be around for a long while to come. □

Southern Lights

AUREALIS #1

A5, 92pp, Aus\$6:95 (4/Aus\$24) from Chimaera Publications, PO Box 538, Mt. Waverley, Victoria 3149, Australia (4/Aus\$39 outside Australia)

It is to our shame that whilst continually eager to embrace SF from the UK and USA, we generally overlook the potential contribution to the genre of that other major English-speaking nation, Australia.

There can be no doubts about the quality of Australian fantasy and SF. George Turner won the Arthur C. Clarke Award for his novel *The Sea and Summer*, whilst Terry Dowling has achieved widespread international coverage in such magazines as *Strange Plasma* and *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*.

Both writers are represented in *Aurealis*, alongside unfamiliar names like Michael Pryor and David Tansey. Indeed, it is Pryor whose "Talent" opens this issue, a well-crafted story about a consultant with intuitive powers to estimate quantity who is hired by a Puritan sect to evaluate the planet they wish to colonise. Next up is a cracking tale by David Tansey, "... And They Shall Wander All Their Days", about deep-space exploration driven to its extremes. Tansey is a writer we deserve to read more of.

Terry Dowling also shows his worth with "In the Dark Rush", a story of one man's obsession with absolution at the jump-point into hyperspace, and its effect on the living spaceship he turns rogue in the process. "5 Cigarettes and 2 Snakes" by Geoffrey Maloney cleverly deals with dissidence and betrayal in a society that has overthrown the corporations and takes an almost Luddite approach to luxury and conspicuous consumption.

On the down side, Dianne M. Speter's "Do We Love?", about the effects of a machine that can detect if people really are in love, is disappointingly throwaway; George Turner's "I Still Call Australia Home", an impeccably crafted extrapolation of the growing population problem, is rather heavy-handed in its didactic approach, and worthy of the '1950s future' epithet applied to *The Sea and Summer*.

Aurealis is nicely – if unimaginatively – laid out, with a pleasant three-colour cover and book-like page format, though some interior illustrations for the stories would make the production more attractive.

Nonetheless, it's the fiction that counts, and there's a host of stimulating ideas that will appeal particularly to readers with a more conservative taste in SF. The high quality of *Aurealis*'s overall content makes this first issue eminently worthy of investigation, and proves that Australia has much to offer the global SF community.

Anne Dyer



pity the artwork gives the plot away. A double shame, really, as the artwork is also remarkably good.

"Shelter", by David Murphy, is set in the aftermath of a nuclear war that has also taken out Ireland. Hopefully this scenario is a bit out of date, but it is well written and Murphy has managed to bring in several original twists.

Michael Cullen's "Just A Zone At Twilight", on the other hand, is a light-hearted romp through Rod Sterling's closet.

The magazine also contains an interview with David Brin, an article on artificial neural networks, and the first of a new series of articles on fantasy.

Although the magazine states that subscriptions are to be in Irish currency, a letter from the editors says that they are able to accept British cheques and postal orders. If in doubt, send an IRC for further details. Issue #7 will be a special souvenir issue for the annual Irish SF convention.

Many small press magazines tend to have a certain sameness about them, but *FTL* has a character of its own. The impression is that it is still in its early days, but that it is evolving fast.

Jim Steel

GALAKTIKA #118 (July 1990)

A4, 100pp, 48,00 Ft

ATLANTISZ Vol I #3

A4, 52pp, 41,50 Ft, both from Peter Bergendy & Gabor Hajdu, Galaktika, Budapest XIV, Majus 1. UT 57-59, Hungary

In their letter which accompanied these magazines, Peter and Gabor explained that *Galaktika* is a monthly magazine devoted to traditional SF that has been published for more than 20 years, winning several international awards in the process.

Fiction by Stephen King, James Tiptree Jr, Bob Shaw and Poul Anderson are the focal points here, together with film and book reviews that are surprisingly up-to-date with western bloc releases. Production is very good compared to other east European publications. The interior is printed on newsprint of better quality than the fiction pages of *Fear*, wrapped in a glossy full-colour cover.

Atlantisz, a new sister magazine for *Galaktika*, already boasts a monthly circulation of 30,000, and covers the Eric/Conan fantasy end of the market. Production is similar to its stablemate, with glossy cover and newsprint interior, and again the fiction has been imported and translated. Susan Hanniford Crowley,

FTL #6

A5, 52pp, 4/IR£6 In Britain and Ireland from FTL, 30 Beverly Downs, Knocklyon Road, Templeogue, Dublin 16, Ireland

Produced by the Irish Science Fiction Association, *FTL* is possibly the only SF magazine in that country. The ISFA also has a newsletter, which leaves *FTL* free to concentrate on fiction.

The stories in this issue are all by writers who are new to me, but they are never less than entertaining, and a couple of them are very strong. John Kenny's tale of an artificially enhanced life kicks off the magazine. Judging by this story and comments in the letters column, Kenny is a writer to watch.

Bobby MacLaughlin's "Hut Two Err" is possibly the best piece in the magazine –

Bruce D. Arthurs, Fritz Leiber and Susan Palwick form the line-up for this issue.

Galaktika also publish about ten SF novels each year, and seem keen to establish links with English-language publishers and writers. Even if you can't read Hungarian, I recommend you get in touch with Peter and Gabor and help build up their network of contacts. □

HORIZON #67-8

A4, #67 24pp, #68 28pp, 80 Bfr. each (6/450 Bfr.) from J. Haelterman, Stationsstraat 232 A, 1770 Liedekerke, Belgium

This bimonthly Flemish-language magazine is not devoted specifically to SF, but represents a range of cultural activities in Belgium. In the two most recent issues, there are articles on the Loch Ness Monster, psychokinesis and the supernatural, as well as features on the participation of the Alan Parsons Project at the Antwerp 'Proms', where the Budapest State Symphony Orchestra also performed, and on Siamese cuisine.

Short fiction, and book, film and TV reviews complete the magazine. British readers will also be interested to note that Alan Hunter is a regular illustrator for *Horizon*, along with American artist Charles Dougherty. □

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Emperor's new clothes?

From: Peter Tennant, Norfolk

I seem to like nearly everything you publish nowadays, and so don't look likely to offend Dave Hughes. I will, however, take issue with some of his views as expressed in your letter column.

On the matter of coherence, I draw my line at the point where I cease to gain any understanding from the text I'm reading. Writing is a form of communication and if this isn't taking place on at least some level, then for me the text has failed. Yes, this is highly subjective, but then isn't all opinion? Of course I appreciate that what seems like arrant nonsense to me might be perfectly comprehensible to someone else, but that doesn't help any. I don't want to reduce writing to the lowest common denominator, but I can't help feeling on occasion that some writers get away with a multitude of sins by sticking an experimental label on their work. It's the Emperor's New Clothes fallacy in a literary context.

Where experimental writing is concerned, it seems as if Dave wants readers to toe some nebulous party line. He wants people simply to say of a story they disliked "it didn't work and leave it at that"; they are not to justify or expand on this statement. To do so is to stand accused of beating other readers into submission with your opinions and dictating what they should read. Yet in disagreeing with John Duffield's views, Dave doesn't leave it at that at all; nor does he refrain from the snide remarks he claims to abhor (I'm sure Dave realises that John's problem-solving scenario was something more complex than getting out of the army by writing a book).

My experience is that editors and writers alike welcome feedback and that often they find negative comments the most useful of all, where the reader explains the reason for his opinion. Comments such as "I didn't like it", "it didn't work for me", are not much use to anyone though. When I write to *BBR* or any other magazine, I see it as part of an ongoing dialogue between myself, the editor, writers and readers at large, not as the next move in some elaborate plot to brainwash everyone into thinking as I do. It is insulting of Dave Hughes to suggest otherwise, both to people like myself who take the trouble to give their feedback and to the readership at large who, by implication, he considers so easily swayed that they will change their choice of reading matter at the first hint of criticism.

I love speculative fiction and experimental writing, but I'm saddened by the dogmatic leanings sometimes evident in Small Press circles. It's regrettable that the editor of *Works* magazine with his 'like it or shut up about it' attitude seems to have climbed on this particular bandwagon. □

From: Mark Haw, Ely, Cambs

If I can indulge myself and state an opinion (something which I rarely do): in all this fuss about small press v. *Interzone* nobody has pointed out what seems to be the real point. The worst thing about *Interzone*, it seems to me, is its rather patronising and superior attitude to the rest of the SF magazine market ('little' magazines, as *Interzone* classifies most of you). Its self-congratulation is on a par with, for instance, Radio 1 or Persil or something.

That's an insult to anybody's intelligence; if you want to know how good a product is, you do *not*, unless you are an

utter idiot, ask the manufacturers. The actual content of the magazine is really no worse or better than most others. There are very good stories/articles, there are very bad stories/articles. The good and bad here are purely the reader's opinion, of course; the annoying self-aggrandizement is more of an objective thing (that's my opinion anyway).

It seems to me, as a suddenly ex-member of the magazine fraternity, that you would all do best to stick together and to support each other. To enter into guns-blazing dogfights will probably only result in the vast majority of you getting shot down. □

From: Peter MacLeod, Aberdeen

Many thanks to David Pringle for his reply to the editorial in #15, this reasoned defense of *Interzone* should keep the pot boiling a bit longer. However, to title it up "The Empire strikes back" – deary me, a trifle clichéd perhaps. Your idea or his?

Perhaps in five or six years we may be reading a similar article by Chris Reed as he responds to the accusations of creative and literary sterility. I hope so as it will mean that the creative, small press culture will still be around and will show a degree of dynamism sadly lacking in recent years.

Looking at issue #16 I was delighted to encounter two highly readable, 'traditional' (sic), Wyndamesque type stories by Tim Nickels and Paul Di Filippo. More of these please.

I do like the new improved layout with the move to an A4 format. In particular the way it allows you to develop two page title graphics as with "Fleshflowers" and also "Madge". □

From: Peter Sidell, Levenshulme, Manchester

I didn't see #15, so I can only go by what was quoted in the various replies to the editorial; but judging by what's there, I'd say that the assertions you made about *Interzone* were at least partly unwarranted. Replying to the comment "...no room for even the occasional adventurous story..." David Pringle gave a list of stories; all of these provoked a reaction from me when I read them. Some ("Mosquito", "Learning to Be Me") I adored; others ("The Panic Hand", "A Lot of Mackerel, A Lot of Satellites") I disliked. But, none failed to leave an impression, and I would not describe any as being particularly 'safe', even when compared to the contents of such magazines as *Works* and *BBR*. □

From: Richard Singer, New York

I greatly enjoyed *BBR* #15 and wholeheartedly agree with your editorial regarding *Interzone*. As I recall, that magazine made a very deliberate change about half-way through the '80s, when they began to ask specifically for "radical hard science fiction," saying that it was necessary to "step back so that we can move ahead" (or some other such gibberish).

It was also very nice that you cited John Shirley's article in *Science Fiction Eye*, which I thought was a phenomenal piece. (I would have thought so – honestly – even if Shirley hadn't spent several paragraphs

discussing one of my short stories!) But, of course, that article is a bit old by now, and we can use a few updates here, there (or anywhere)... ☐

From: John Francis Haines, Warrington

Can I make a plea for tolerance? Just lately there has been quite a lot of feuding going on in the pages of the small press SF magazines as to the merits of this or that magazine, mainly, it seems, on the basis of whether or not the magazine in question plays safe with the material it publishes, or is on the 'cutting edge' of new fiction, is experimental/avant garde or whatever else you wish to call it.

Now, surely, with at least half a dozen magazines established in this country it is possible for nearly every taste to be catered for – surely you don't want every magazine to be a little clone of one type? There is a very downside to British SF at the moment – but that, I think, will change – it just happens to appear dominant at the moment and I don't think that it is either permanent or necessarily bad in itself – it is obviously expressing some sort of psychological need, just as post-armageddon stories did in the 60s and 70s, or sword and sorcery does still.

Variety, as they say, is the spice of life – it's certainly the spice of SF, and I hope we never lose that variety. ☐

From: Dave Curl, Leeds

Chris Hart may be on to more than he realises when he says that SF is too obsessed with finding a role, and with manifestos. Marshall McLuhan once said that the future of literature lay in the blurb: perhaps SF should bodily throw itself into the 21st century by cutting out the fiction, extending the letter columns, and promoting its own endless redefinition. In that way, it would become the one true post-modernist genre: taken as a whole, it would resemble a television camera pointed at its own image, producing strange, beautiful feedback patterns, but no coherent reflection of the outside world. ☐

From: Tim Nickels, Devon

Things are pretty lively on the letters front! Being very much entrenched in the the real world (especially in these last few summer months) I fear I can't really get worked up about anything much. It's good to see the good old cut and thrust of debate though – and it certainly beats the 'my top ten favourite stories are ...' *Dream*-like approach.

It's best not to get too bitter amongst ourselves though: way back in the summer there was a BBC Radio 4 book programme that claimed to discuss how writers envisaged the future, or somesuch theme. Not surprisingly, genre science fiction writers were dismissed within the first five minutes of this half-hour 'discussion', as authors who "only wrote about rockets and stuff" (this is a direct quotation).

The rest of the programme was given over (naturally) to Booker Prize-winning authors who thought that setting a book against a post-holocaust background was something of a novel wheeze guaranteed to send their prattish peers (and R4 book programmes) into smug orgasm. It's enough to make us sci-fi guys just get into our aircars and beam off to the Planet Llaeggub, don't you reckon?

Yes, encourage the debate within – but take the wider perspective too, and be aware of the vast and disinterested enemy without. ☐

From: Jim Steel, Strathclyde

One of the things I like about BBR is your global review policy. SF is supposed to open people's minds to new modes of thought, and it's infuriating when a lot of magazines and books give the impression that there's nothing outside of Britain and America. Cultural tunnel vision does no-one any favours.

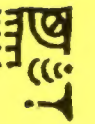
Nice to see the *Interzone* debate developing – I personally feel that *Interzone*

has done a lot to help the small press, but when they use a patronising tone about the scene, they shouldn't be surprised when they draw some flak. Let's face it – BBR #16 is equal to any (and better than most) of the *Interzones* that I've read. Guess my chances of selling to them are really screwed now! Career sense of a mule.

What else? Anthony North's letter raised a couple of interesting points. I have read a copy of *Rattler's Tale* and, while it's not to my taste, I did think that you went a wee bit over the score on the review. Having said that, Anthony goes on to state that it is necessary to wean readers gently. This can seriously backfire. SF is not the only mode of writing, and, unless you can give your readers something thought-provoking and challenging, you will lose them. In my own case, I had virtually stopped reading SF until, about two years ago, I was introduced to the delights of cyberpunk and, yeah, *Interzone*. (Okay, so I'm a late developer ...) I then went on to discover BBR, *Works* and *New Pathways*, and now there's no stopping me. But my point is, if readers think that the cutting edge of the genre lies with *Analog* and David Gemell, for example, then you will lose an awful lot of valuable people.

Nearly forgot! That magazine news column is a great idea – just the kind of thing us struggling hacks like to read. I also liked the *Turkey Shoot* review (but maybe I'm biased ...), very nice indeed. So thanks for a very enjoyable issue, but how on earth can you top this one? ☐



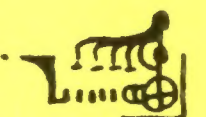
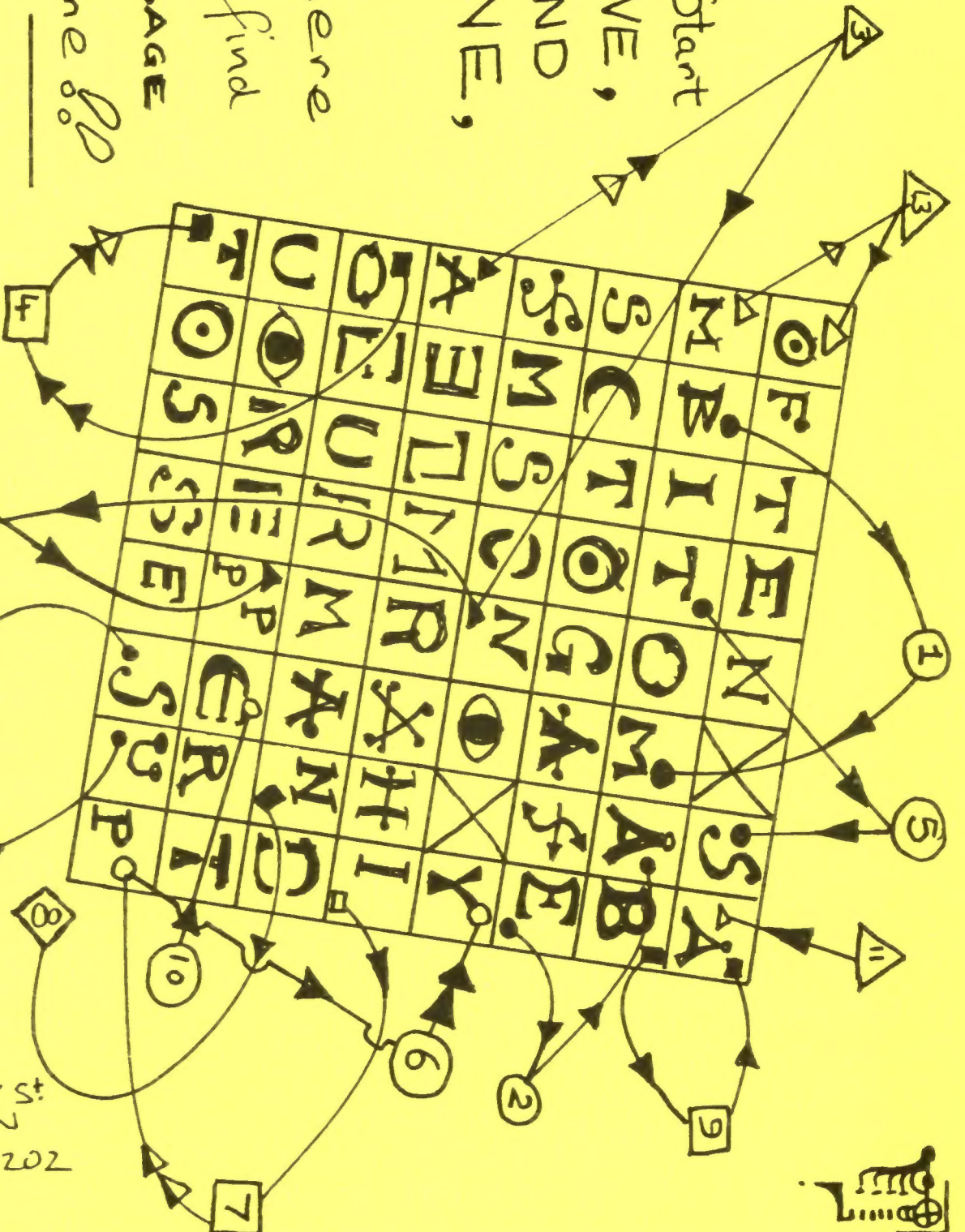


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